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CONTENTS

Part 1 (1979)

"Fair befall the Flax Field": aspects of the history of the Boyle family and their flax business	<i>M. B. Boyle</i>	1
The Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education: 1871-91	<i>I. Jenkins</i>	27
Obituary: Charles Athelstane Lupton	<i>G. Woledge</i>	72
Obituary: Kenneth John Bonser	<i>G. Woledge</i>	72

Part 2 (1980)

The Leeds Workhouse under the Old Poor Law: 1726-1834	<i>P. Anderson</i>	75
The origins of gas in Leeds: the Leeds Gas Light Company, 1817-35	<i>A. Lockwood</i>	114

Part 3 (1981)

The Leeds Rational Recreation Society, 1852-9: "Music for the People" in a mid-Victorian city	<i>D. Russell</i>	137
William Vavasour: the Squire of Weston, 1798-1833	<i>M. Creaser</i>	159
The Dewsbury Riots and the Revd. Benjamin Ingham	<i>B. Scott</i>	187
Obituary: Frank Beckwith	<i>G. Woledge</i>	196
Annotated list of the writings of Frank Beckwith	<i>G. Woledge</i>	198

“FAIR BEFALL THE FLAX FIELD”:¹ ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE BOYLE FAMILY AND THEIR FLAX BUSINESS

by
M. B. BOYLE

THIS ARTICLE follows the fortunes principally of three generations of the Boyle family — James Boyle (1769-1815), his eldest son, Humphrey Bellamy Boyle (1794-1864), and another James Boyle (1835-1909), son of Humphrey. It deals in particular with the political interests and activities of Humphrey Bellamy Boyle, and also gives some account of the establishment and development of the family firm which, though one of the smaller firms engaged in the Leeds flax trade, has adapted sufficiently over the years to have remained in business within the field of natural fibres.

James Boyle the elder (1769-1815) signed his articles of apprenticeship in Newcastle upon Tyne shortly before his eleventh birthday.² During the seven years when he was learning his trade he was paid at the rate of 3s. per week for the first three years, 3s. 6d. per week for the second three years and 4s. per week during the seventh year. James's mother had been widowed soon after his birth; she is said to have recognized that people without a trade had great difficulty in getting and keeping employment, and she determined that this fate should not befall her children. It was through her hard work that she got them into apprenticeships, and therefore into trades: indeed it can be said that the results of her efforts live on to this day, for the apprenticeship into which her youngest son entered in 1780 profoundly affected his future and that of his descendants.

James married in 1790,³ and nine children were to be born to him and his wife. The family remained on Tyneside until the turn of the century; they were possibly in the Cleveland area for a while, where

¹From lines recorded in Killingbeck MSS — Preliminary drafts for History of Hunslet: Flax Industry (Thoresby Society Library MS Box VIII). This article is a shortened version of one prepared for private circulation, under the same title.

²Deed of apprenticeship 19 December 1780, James Boyle/James Pollard. Leeds City Archives (L.C.A.) Acc. 2162/6.

³Copy, Registers of St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle, Newcastle Reference Library.

there was a flourishing linen industry, but they were in Leeds by the early months of 1810. James is said to have moved south because of the fame of the mills of John Marshall, and it was Marshall for whom he is said to have worked for some years, whilst living in Meadow Lane. He died in 1815, aged 46.⁴

Humphrey Bellamy Boyle (1794-1864) was the third child and eldest son of James and his wife. He was apprenticed in March 1811 to Benyon, Benyon and Bage of Meadow Lane as a 'heckler' (i.e. a flaxdresser), the signatures of both himself and his father appearing on the deed.⁵ During the seven years' apprenticeship he received: for the first three years, for every cwt. of tow dressed 1s. 8d.; for the second three years, for every cwt. of flax dressed 2s. 6d. and in the seventh year, for every cwt. of flax dressed 3s.

It may be of interest to note here that in 1820 the journeymen flaxdressers of Leeds were informed by *The Republican* that "the general body of journeymen of this country are intelligent men".⁶ But in September of the following year William Brown of Dundee visited Leeds to collect information about the flax trade and reported, "The chief advantage of dressing flax by machine is that it gets rid of troublesome hecklers".⁷ Unfortunately he failed to say whether it was a Leeds informant who described these men as troublesome or whether he was drawing on his own experience; possibly hecklers were generally known for their enquiring and independent attitude of mind. It would seem that Humphrey Boyle was typical in this respect.

Humphrey Boyle and the Free Press Movement, 1818-24

The first information of Humphrey Boyle's interest in the affairs of his time is reported for 1818, the year in which he completed his apprenticeship. He was then a member of a group of Radical Reformers meeting in Union Court, off Briggate in Leeds, who read to one another from newspapers and periodicals, including Wooler's *Black Dwarf* and Cobbett's *Register*. They discussed affairs, distributed liberal literature and were active in forwarding the cause of free discussion.⁸ In the first part of the nineteenth century, there were only a few newspapers; some were published daily in London, but

⁴ Registers of Leeds Parish Church.

⁵ Deed of apprenticeship 30 March 1811, Humphrey Bellamy Boyle/James Boyle/Thos. Benyon "for self and partners". L.C.A. Acc. 2162/7.

⁶ *The Republican*, Vol. III no. 12, 14 July 1820.

⁷ W. Brown, Information regarding Flax Spinning in Leeds (1821). Typescript, Leeds Reference Library (L.R.L.).

⁸ W. J. Linton, *James Watson – a memoir* (1879), 11-21.

those coming out in provincial centres, as well as most of the London ones, were weeklies only; it was not until the second half of the century that provincial newspapers could be produced successfully as dailies.⁹ In the earlier period, only a few of each issue were produced, and the cost included a stamp duty — a tax which in 1815 was raised to 4d. per copy. There were, moreover, stringent laws as to what might and might not be published. These limitations — the scarcity, the high cost and the restrictions on content — made many people feel that they were being deprived of information, and consequently were hampered in forming independent opinions and judgements.

The general and increasing demand for greater knowledge and education added strength to a movement calling for greater freedom of the press. Publications were appearing which did not comply with the law, and people in consequence were liable to prosecution, not only those who published the offending matter, but also those who organized and carried out its sale.¹⁰ A local example was that of James Mann, a Leeds bookseller. The letters of some London publishers were opened by the Post Office, and Mann's orders were among those noted, with the result that the Home Office requested the Mayor of Leeds to purchase, if possible, a copy of Sherwin's *Register* (a proscribed publication) from Mann's shop. This the Mayor succeeded in doing, and consequently Mann was indicted and sent to York Assizes. He was convicted only after a jury had twice tried to bring in an alternative verdict, and he never received a sentence. The rebelliousness of the jury possibly reflected a feeling then current in Yorkshire, for even the Lord Lieutenant had been reprovved and suspended from office for attending a Radical meeting.¹¹

One of the principal campaigners at this period for greater press freedom was Richard Carlile, a native of Dorset who had become a London publisher. He was involved not only in producing original articles but also in reprinting books and other material, sometimes in serial form, such as the works of Elihu Palmer and Thomas Paine, much of which was proscribed by law. Carlile was eventually arrested for these activities; he was tried in December 1819, and imprisoned in Dorchester Gaol. His sentence was for two years, but, as he was not able to raise the additional heavy fines, he was not released until November 1825.¹²

⁹ e.g. *The Leeds Mercury* (L.M.), first published in 1718, increased from once to thrice weekly in 1855; it became a daily in 1861.

¹⁰ W. H. Wickwar, *The Fight for the Freedom of the Press* (1928), 102-14.

¹¹ Wickwar *op. cit.*, 110; J. Mayhall, *Annals of Yorkshire*, 21 October 1819.

¹² Wickwar *op. cit.*, particularly 67-75 and 82-96.

After Carlile was imprisoned his wife kept the business going until in due course she, too, was prosecuted and received a two-year sentence which she served with her husband in Dorchester. Carlile's sister, Mary Ann, then took over the shop, and before long she also was served with an indictment. Humphrey Boyle knew of these matters: they were widely reported. Many of course supported the action being taken to suppress the publication and sale of literature which the authorities had proscribed, but there were others who expressed concern more especially about the laws under which these and similar trials took place. In all, there was a considerable groundswell of interest in Carlile, and what he stood for; groups of people in most large centres supported his campaign, in the hope that it would result in greater freedom of publication and discussion.

Whilst Mary Ann Carlile was awaiting trial, her brother issued an appeal from Dorchester asking for volunteers to man his London shop, should his sister be imprisoned. The proceedings against her eventually culminated in her being sent to Dorchester Gaol on 15 November 1821: three days later, and possibly as this news reached Leeds, Humphrey Boyle wrote to Carlile offering his help, an offer which was accepted "so long", wrote Carlile, "as you are a single man". If that were the case, he was to apply to Mr. Mann for £1 expenses and was to get to London within the month. He would find bed and board at the shop, at No. 55 Fleet Street.¹³

Anyone responding to Carlile's appeal must have recognised that he was putting himself in danger of arrest, but the issues involved had become of vital importance to many. Boyle must have been one of these, for he left Leeds in the early part of December and made his way to London.¹⁴ Carlile had taken the premises at 55 Fleet Street about three years earlier, when he had needed more space for his business and his family.¹⁵ An ingenious device was introduced at the back of the shop, whereby it was possible to serve customers without the vendor being seen, and so making the identification of the shop assistants more difficult. A dial was set on the screen between the shop and the room lying behind it upon which the names and prices of the various publications were inscribed. The customer moved a pointer on the dial to indicate what he wished to buy, putting his money in a small tray which could be swung round to the unseen assistant in the room

¹³ Carlile to Boyle, 26 November 1821. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/5.

¹⁴ *Report of the Trial of Humphrey Boyle, to which is attached the trial of Joseph Rhodes* (1822).

¹⁵ Wickwar *op. cit.*, 74.

behind. His purchase and any change were delivered to him in like manner.¹⁶

However, this device was of little help to Humphrey Boyle. He was arrested on 27 December¹⁷ by a City Officer for selling a pamphlet, price 6d., containing an article by Carlile, dated June 1821, "To the Reformers of Great Britain", in which reference was made to the works of Thomas Paine, and to the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Another volunteer shopman, Joseph Rhodes of Manchester, who had also arrived recently from the North, was arrested on the same day and on the same count.¹⁸ Neither he nor Boyle would give their names, and they were committed to the Giltspur Street Compter. By the January Sessions they had been moved to Newgate and, appearing at the Court of King's Bench, again refused to say who they were, in order to gain greater publicity for the prosecutions and consequently to encourage yet more discussion of their cause – the need to amend the law relating to the Press.

In February Joseph Rhodes was convicted under the name of William Holmes (someone claiming to recognise him as such), and he was given a two-year sentence. Boyle was again remanded in Newgate. There was concern that it had not proved possible to raise the requisite amount for bail, especially as the months went by.¹⁹ Carlile advised on various legal counsel, but suggested caution in accepting offers which had been made to pay fees: he thought Boyle should conduct his own defence. At one time there was a suggestion that Habeas Corpus should be invoked. Carlile, as always writing from Dorchester, asked what decision had been made, and, later, what progress was being made about obtaining a Writ of Certiorari.²⁰

It was presumably on such a writ that the case was moved to the Old Bailey Sessions House from the Court of King's Bench on 24 May 1822 for a fresh indictment. The trial proceeded three days later, on 27 May, before Mr. Common Sergeant Denman, Boyle conducting his own defence. He read his main speech. It is not possible here to do more than comment shortly on the trial. "I assert my right not only to hold but to publish . . . the principles indicted, not for any feeling of arrogance, but from the sense of the necessity of free discussion",

¹⁶ Wickwar *op. cit.*, 219; W. G. Bell, *Fleet Street in Seven Centuries* (1912), 552.

¹⁷ *Trial of Humphrey Boyle*, preamble.

¹⁸ *Trial of Humphrey Boyle*. This information differs from that given in Wickwar, 217 and 219.

¹⁹ Carlile to Boyle 23 March, 27 May 1822. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/5.

²⁰ *Universal Dictionary*: "A writ issuing from a superior court removing a case from a lower court or calling for the records of trial for the correction of errors etc."

Boyle said. A section of his defence is sometimes mentioned,²¹ in which he read some of the more indecent passages of the Old Testament. Such references do not explain that he was criticising the Society for the Suppression of Vice who on the one hand advocated the practice of religion (and consequently the reading of the Bible) whilst on the other took legal action against the publication of “blasphemous and seditious libels”, arguing that the Society was illogical in its premises.²² In Boyle’s view “True religion is the act of advocating truth, of renouncing error, of contemplating reality, of drawing wisdom from experience”. He continued, “To be impious is to insult systems in which we believe . . . to admit a benevolent, just God at the same time as we preach persecution and carnage . . . to deceive men in the name of the Deity for our own unworthy passions. On the other hand, to be pious is to serve . . . with fidelity, to be useful to our fellow creatures, to labour for the welfare of society”. And so the trial proceeded, and the jury found him guilty. The Common Sergeant, who commented “your mind is neither unenlightened nor mis-directed”, pronounced sentence: eighteen months’ imprisonment, at the end of which he was to find sureties for five years, £100 from Boyle himself and two others of £40 each. He was charged, tried and sentenced as “a man with name unknown”; he is reported to have responded to his sentence with “I have a mind, my Lord, that can bear such a sentence with fortitude”.²³

Boyle wrote to Carlile the day after his trial, whilst he was awaiting transfer from Newgate to the Giltspur Street Compter, where he was to serve his sentence. “After keeping me five months in prison, they have at last tried me without a name, so it is evident they might have tried me sooner had they liked. . . . Now I am about to leave Newgate I can tell you how I have lain these five months. A hempen mat, laid on the floor and three rugs for covering is all that is allowed a prisoner in Newgate: but after the first month I thought nothing of it, and have often observed that I believe I should get used to the regions of Pluto. I intend to obtain at the Compter . . . a room to ourselves. Before I took up reading political and theological writings, I was fond of amusing myself at arithmetic and I have a fondness for it still . . . my eighteen months’ imprisonment shall not be eighteen months of my life lost. I can gain some knowledge of geometry. Grammar I cannot study – it is not at all suitable to my taste”.²⁴

²¹ e.g. Wickwar *op. cit.*, 219.

²² In his summing up, the Common Sergeant said “It is a misfortune, in this age of refined language, that parts of the Bible were not omitted”.

²³ *The Times*, 28 May 1822.

²⁴ *The Republican*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 7 June 1822.

Letters from Carlile in the subsequent months²⁵ referred principally to the books they read and to contributions made by Boyle to the *Republican*,²⁶ a journal published in London by Carlile, from his prison. Carlile wanted Boyle to write “on any and every subject” – his articles were well received and he was to have every encouragement. The question of Boyle taking up the management of Carlile’s business was discussed and agreed: he was to assume this responsibility on his release. Matters of current interest were raised: that Mr. Hume was to take up the question of free discussion in Parliament; that Mr. Grey Bennett would call at Giltspur Street to learn of the abuses Boyle had observed and experienced in Newgate. Carlile had already reported on the floggings in Dorchester.²⁷ The Radical Reformers in Leeds were in disagreement, one of their difficulties being the selection of the next volunteer to become one of Carlile’s shopmen. Their choice finally rested on James Watson, a Malton-born man who in due course was to establish himself in London and become one of the early leaders of the Trade Union movement.²⁸

Boyle had another correspondent in William Tunbridge,²⁹ a shopman who received a two-year sentence on 20 January 1823, the first two weeks of which were spent in Newgate, the rest in Cold Bath Fields Prison. He was a nephew of Joseph Rhodes, who was with Humphrey Boyle at Giltspur Street, and his letters tell of prison life.

At the date of his trial, Tunbridge had a severe cold, and was consequently put in the prison infirmary when he arrived at Newgate. Some days later, when the surgeon said he was well enough to be moved to the ordinary accommodation he wrote to the Governor, protesting “against being confined in any room with Convicted Felons or walking in the same yard as persons convicted of Abominable Offences”. (He and the other shopmen were political prisoners.) In the resulting interview, the Governor agreed that Tunbridge should remain in the infirmary until his transfer to Cold Bath Fields took place. When this move occurred, he was confined “in what is called the State Room. I am in every respect more comfortable than you”, he

²⁵ Carlile to Boyle, 25 August 1822, 8 January, 6 March, 13 April, 13 July 1823. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/5.

²⁶ There are many references to Humphrey Boyle as well as his articles in *The Republican*, Vols. V-IX.

²⁷ Joseph Hume (1777-1855) and the Hon. Henry Grey Bennett (1777-1841) were both members of Parliament and involved in social issues. The latter was active in prison reform.

²⁸ James Watson (1799-1874); Linton *op. cit.*, 18.

²⁹ Tunbridge to Boyle: letters 22, 26 January, 13, 26 February, 3 April, 1 May, 6 June, 6, 26 July, 27 August, 5, 28 October 1823. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/4.

wrote, "I have a good room with two large windows and no iron bars and a good view over Highgate, Hampstead and Kentish Town". A good fire was available and a servant was provided "at the expense of the County". There is no mention of prison food: he probably had provisions brought in, even though he is reported to have lived on bread and gruel.³⁰ He wrote (6 June 1823) "I must say I was not a little pleased to see my Aunt and Cousin for they came loaded with the good things of this earth. Whilst they staid the time passed merrily."³¹

Very soon after his arrival at Cold Bath Fields his trunkful of some thirty books was delivered, though he was not allowed access to them until they had been inspected by the Prison Chaplain, who would have withheld one – Byron's *Don Juan* – "on the grounds that it had an immoral tendency". Tunbridge pointed out to the Chaplain that it was a work which had not been proscribed and (apparently with some glee) that it had first been published by Mr. Murray of Albemarle Street, and *he* was Bookseller to His Majesty. The Chaplain thereupon withdrew his objection, but asked that it should not be lent to anyone, a condition apparently interpreted as applying only to Cold Bath Fields, as some weeks later Tunbridge was acknowledging its return from Giltspur Street.³²

Shopmen, barristers, prison governors and politicians are mentioned in these letters, the name of James Watson, the second volunteer from Leeds, appearing frequently as, after his trial early in 1823, he shared Tunbridge's accommodation at Cold Bath Fields.³³ The last letter of the series refers to Boyle's coming release. A month earlier it had been announced in the *Republican* that he was short of only £40 of his total sureties, and Carlile suggested that the sum should be donated by well-wishers: "£20 each from two persons", money which was presumably forthcoming, as Boyle left Giltspur Street on 27 November 1823.

Boyle visited Carlile in Dorchester almost immediately after his own release and, as had been arranged some months previously, he became manager of Carlile's business, which by this time had been moved to No. 84 Fleet Street. However, he resigned the following July, apparently on account of disagreement with Mrs. Carlile who was "of the opinion that the men who volunteer to stand prosecution are

³⁰ Wickwar *op. cit.*, 223.

³¹ Presumably the wife of Joseph Rhodes and their daughter Mary Ann, then aged 15 years. In letter to Boyle, 6 March 1823, Carlile had offered them accommodation at the shop if they cared to visit for a week or so.

³² *Don Juan* was essential reading for all progressives and reformers at this date.

³³ Linton *op. cit.*, 19.

fellows too idle to work for their livings". So towards the end of the month Boyle left Carlile's employment and made his way North.³⁴

It seems likely that Boyle did not find a wholly hostile atmosphere when he returned to Leeds, even if one of his sisters is said to have regarded his years in London as a disgrace. There were people, some of considerable standing, who sympathised with the aspirations and activities of those working in their various ways for reform, and he may have had a welcome from them as well as from other members of the community.³⁵

Humphrey Boyle's Social and Political Interests

Humphrey Boyle's interest in social and political affairs continued to play an important part in his life. He moved away from his old group of Radical Reformers on his return to Leeds, disagreeing with some of their activities and always deprecating violence. During 1830-31 he conducted an investigation into the living costs in "food, clothing and other necessities" for the working man and his family.³⁶ He was active in the campaigns for Parliamentary Reform, which at this period were gathering momentum.³⁷ In this connection the Leeds (Holbeck) Political Union (LPU) was formed in 1831 "by a respectable body of mechanics", amongst the objectives of which were: "to promote the rights and liberties of the industrious classes; to prepare petitions . . . respecting the preservation and restoration of public rights; to collect and organise the peaceful expression of public opinion; and to promote, by every legal means, the election of upright and capable representatives of the people". The middling and working classes shared the places on the LPU's Political Council, which had thirty-six members; half were from the professions and employers, the other half were operatives (i.e. employees) – the "respectable mechanics".

Boyle was elected a member of the Political Council as an operative. The general meetings were reported in the Press,³⁸ the first, held at the Cross Keys Inn in Little Holbeck, was attended by about 200 persons;

³⁴ Linton *op. cit.*, Watson's speech – "In August of this year (1824) Mr. Boyle who had managed Mr. Carlile's business sometime, withdrew from it. I was applied to by Mr. Carlile to supply his place".

³⁵ Names mentioned (oral tradition) Edward Baines, Editor of the *Leeds Mercury*; John Marshall.

³⁶ W. G. Rimmer, "Working Men's Cottages in Leeds". *Thoresby Society Publications*, Vol. XLVI, 199.

³⁷ A. S. Turberville, "Leeds and Parliamentary Reform 1820-1832". *Thoresby Society Publications*, Vol. XLI, 1-88.

³⁸ *L.M.* 5, 19, 26 November, 10, 17, 24, 31 December 1831, 7 January, 4, 18 August 1832, 16, 23 February 1833.

before long, the meetings had to be moved to the Large Room in Commercial Buildings, and had an estimated attendance of between 1000 and 1200 people. Some seventy names appear in the *Leeds Mercury* reports of the meetings: the names of the great cloth merchants and the Tories of the day are absent, but there is otherwise a wide-ranging group including solicitors, ironfounders, machine makers, a surgeon, persons in many different crafts within the flax and wool trades, innkeepers and others. They include one of Boyle's friends, William Baynes; two of his future partners William Mennell³⁹ and Joseph Gill;⁴⁰ two well known stationers, John Heaton junior and J. W. Bean; and the compiler of Leeds and other Directories, William Parson. The Chairman of the LPU was Joshua Bower, the glass founder, whilst the Vice-Chairman was one of the operatives, William Nichols, later to establish a firm of machine makers. Some LPU members had, like Boyle, been supporters of Richard Carlile's campaign of ten years previously for the greater freedom of the Press and of discussion.

The Reform Act was passed in 1832, but Boyle did not qualify for a vote in the election held later that year. He had one at the election in 1834, but not in 1835, the eligibility of many on the Register for the 1834 election having been successfully challenged. He was, however, on the Register for the Leeds Borough from 1835 onwards; he did not qualify for a West Riding vote for some time.⁴¹ However, being unfranchised at some of the early elections did not prevent him from taking an interest in political events. Many years later, in 1878, a friend wrote to Boyle's widow, after he had found some old letters,⁴² "I can read [them] with pleasure even at this distance of time for though they relate to elections and political subjects which have long become obsolete, they are couched in his own lucid and pungent style". Fortunately he was unable to resist quoting some extracts: "3 June 1835, writing about the West Riding election, just after being defeated in the [Leeds] Borough when Sir John Beckett was returned,

³⁹ William Mennell, machine maker, b. Brompton, Northallerton 1794, d. Leeds 1854.

⁴⁰ Joseph Gill, flaxdresser of Leeds (1796-1857); not to be confused with Joseph Gill, bleacher of Headingley.

⁴¹ During the Anti Corn Law campaign, and following a visit to Leeds of Cobden and Bright, Boyle and some friends bought six houses in Holbeck, outside the Leeds Borough boundary, thus qualifying for a West Riding vote as well as a Leeds vote, and so contributing towards the provision of an opposition in the County constituencies where lay the principal support for the Corn Laws. Letter, Humphrey Boyle to James Kerr Boyle, 5 December 1844. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/24; L.M. 7 December 1844; West Yorkshire Registry of Deeds (W.Y.R.D.) OY/736/730 (January 1845).

⁴² William Baynes to Mrs. Ann Boyle, 26 February 1878. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/24.

he [Boyle] said 'All the forenoon of the first day Wortley was at the head of the Leeds District and we had no more information from any other place: large blue sheets were carried about with the Leeds statement and nothing from the Orange Committee: this was far from pleasant but my pluck was not down. Towards one o'clock an orange placard appeared with MORPETH HEADS THE POLL: 600 ABOVE WORTLEY; we were in nagging⁴³ fettle directly; we poked our noses into every group of Tories, comforting them with our most soothing doses . . . '".

Nearly two years later, on 19 March 1837, Boyle had written: ". . . within these two hours I have learnt that Sir William Molesworth [a future candidate] will dine at Commercial Buildings on Easter Monday. Come then". Ann his wife seems also to have been infected with the interest and excitement of the political scene; on 27 July 1837, after exulting in the Great and Glorious victory of Baines and Molesworth over Beckett, he [Boyle] concluded: "Ann would like to hear your account of your election. I think she is in love with your 'shoeless, stockingless loons' who played so great a part in your last election. Write soon and you will oblige your friends".

Boyle and Son Limited: Origins and History

(a) *Boyle Carr & Co., Jack Lane Mill, 1836-1840*

Not very much is known about Boyle's working life during the years immediately following his return from London in 1824, except that he returned to his trade of flax dresser. He may have worked as a journeyman for a time, but by 1828 he held a position of some responsibility with Marshall and Co., by far the largest firm of flax spinners; he is said to have travelled abroad on their behalf.

Two letters have survived which were addressed by Marshall's to Boyle, who was in Penzance at the time.⁴⁴ Communications took time and Marshall's or any other firm must have invested their representatives with considerable authority, placing reliance on their knowledge and initiative. It appears that a ship laden with flax had put in at Penzance. "In one very important point we are uninformed . . . that is, why the Market Maid⁴⁵ put in at Penzance at all . . . we hope you will have got the flax dry and shipped ere this". Marshall's stated that they would want Boyle's examination of the vendor's account when it came, and his estimate of the damage to the flax. "Is it £10 per

⁴³ Baynes defined "nagging" as "synonymous with the modern slang term 'chaffing'".

⁴⁴ Marshall and Co. to Boyle, 12 and 13 May 1828. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/24.

⁴⁵ *Lloyd's List*, 1828 – *Market Maid*: a sloop, single deck 107 tons.

ton the worse?" they ask. He was to return by coach via London, and was asked to "call in at Hill Street". (John Marshall, the founder of the firm, had become one of the two West Riding M.P.s in 1826, being the first manufacturer to enter the House of Commons. He had a London house at No. 34 Hill Street, Berkeley Square.)

So far as is known, Boyle continued to work for Marshall's for the next eight years, by which time he must have had an extensive knowledge of the trade, and his political activities and his journeys at home and abroad must have added a valuable extension to his experience. It is therefore not surprising to find him leaving Marshall and Co. to work independently, a venture which can be dated to 1836, the annual review of the Register of Parliamentary Electors of that year showing him as having a vote not only on his house and shop in Meadow Lane,⁴⁶ but also on a mill in Jack Lane. No *Directory* was published that year, but in 1837 is listed "Boyle Carr and Co., Flax and Tow Spinners, Jack Lane Mill, and Flax Dressers, Top of Grey Walk, Hunslet Lane".

In addition to Humphrey Boyle, the partners in Boyle Carr and Co. were Peter Carr (1796-1851) flaxdresser and shopkeeper, of York Street; Joseph Gill⁴⁷ who in addition to being a flaxdresser had an inn and brew house in Canning Street; William Mennell⁴⁸ of Wellington Street and later of Dewsbury Road; and James Pitts (born 1806) of Commercial Street, Holbeck. Jack Lane Mill stood very near the crossing of Meadow Lane and Jack Lane. A description of it appeared in an advertisement of 1833: it was four stories high, with 5200 square feet of floor space. There was stone work "ready for the fixing of an engine of 20 horse power . . . and an excellent and never failing supply of soft water from a borehole six inches in diameter".⁴⁹

What was the link between this partnership, Boyle Carr and Co., and the firm now known as Boyle and Son Ltd.? From mid-Victorian times the latter has been stated to have been "Established 1824",⁵⁰ a date which, it was said, related to a time before Boyle joined the organisation. As he joined Boyle Carr in 1836, what of the preceding twelve years? The link, it seems, must be through Peter Carr.

The earliest known information that Peter Carr was a flaxdresser is in the Leeds Marriage Registers of 1820. There are few records of

⁴⁶ Boyle was by now living at No. 79 Meadow Lane, a house which was re-numbered No. 88 in 1839 and No. 90 c. 1860.

⁴⁷ See note 40.

⁴⁸ See note 39.

⁴⁹ *L.M.*, 30 March 1833. I am indebted to Mr. E. J. Connell for bringing this to my notice.

⁵⁰ Old letter headings; oral tradition.

minor firms of this period, but in 1826 he is listed as a flaxdresser in Duke Street, whilst later he had a flax warehouse at Blayds Court (which was at the top of Grey Walk, Hunslet Lane). In the Commercial Directory of 1834 is listed a firm of flaxdressers, Carr Gill and Baines, of Hunslet Lane. The next *Directory* was that of 1837, in which Boyle Carr and Co. is listed: the firm of Carr Gill and Baines does not appear. It seems reasonable to postulate that Carr worked independently, or as Carr Gill and Baines, from 1824, that in 1836 Baines withdrew from that partnership leaving Carr and Gill to join Boyle Carr and Co., who not only had Jack Lane Mill, but also the flax dressing establishment at "Top of Grey Walk".

Boyle would be well aware of developments taking place within his trade as he worked to further the interests of Boyle Carr. Not far from his house in Meadow Lane stood Trafalgar Mill, which, though once occupied by a woollen yarn manufacturer, was by 1830 under the occupancy of a flax spinner, John Wilkinson. Wilkinson prospered, so much so that within ten years he built a much larger establishment in Goodman Street, about a mile away towards the village of Hunslet. The knowledge that Wilkinson was preparing to move influenced the planning of Boyle Carr, for on 21 November 1839 it was agreed that their partnership should be dissolved six months later, on 21 April 1840,⁵¹ when a new partnership of Boyle, Gill, Mennell and Pitts, that is, without Peter Carr, was formed. Under the style of Boyle Gill and Co., the firm moved from Jack Lane Mill to Trafalgar Mill when Wilkinson went to his new mills in Goodman Street.⁵²

(b) *Boyle Gill and Co., Trafalgar Mill, 1840-1853*

Boyle Gill and Co. were at Trafalgar Mill for thirteen years, from 1840 to 1853. Here there was an opportunity to expand the business: whereas there had been an estimated 3000 spindles at Jack Lane Mill, there were an estimated 5300 at Trafalgar Mill in 1842,⁵³ a number which had increased to 6246 by 1853.⁵⁴ The firm was in the small-to-medium range compared with other Leeds flax spinners, and must have been reasonably prosperous during these years.

There is considerable information about Trafalgar Mill at this period.⁵⁵ It stood on the east side of Meadow Lane, about 250 yards

⁵¹ *L.M.*, 30 May 1840.

⁵² Registers of Parliamentary Electors; Directories.

⁵³ Marshall Papers, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.

⁵⁴ *L.M.*, 16 April 1853.

⁵⁵ Ground floor plan of Trafalgar Mill. L.C.A. DB/5/94; Wages Book 26 July 1851 – 26 March 1853. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/25; Catalogue of the contents of Trafalgar Mill, Leeds. Goodchild Loan MSS, Wakefield District Archives.

south of Leeds Bridge, and covered a site of some 15,000 square feet. It was brick built. To the north of the site was Trafalgar Row, a narrow thoroughfare running from Meadow Lane towards Hunslet Lane; to the south was Lees Yard, whilst to the rear was Perseverance Mill. Both Perseverance and Trafalgar Mills were the property of one Charles Charnock, Boyle Gill being sub-tenants of John Wilkinson, the previous occupier.

There were two entrances to Trafalgar Mill, both from Meadow Lane. The one nearer to Leeds Bridge opened on to a yard, with the Counting House building immediately on the left hand. Ahead were a warehouse and the two card rooms, whilst on the right hand were two large blocks known as the Old and the New Mills, containing the line preparing room, the lower and upper hackling rooms, three spinning rooms, and the upper and lower reel rooms. Attached to these mill buildings were the engine house, together with the boiler house and a tall chimney. The second entrance from Meadow Lane, to the south of the property, led by a roadway to another extensive yard at the back of the premises. Here hung the mill bell, whilst around the yard was a second warehouse block, housing the lower, middle and upper flax warehouses, hackling shops, a tow warehouse, a bobbin room, a press shop, and various workshops such as those for the smith and the joiner. The Mill was lit by gas.

The main mill buildings had a full complement of machinery, for instance for flax breaking and hackling, whilst spiral cone roving frames, rotary gill frames, finishing cards and drawing frames contributed towards the preparation of the fibre prior to its going to the spinning rooms, where frames with a total of some 5000 to 6000 spindles were set. All this machinery was connected to the engine room by circular shafting; there was a system of cast iron steam and water pipes around the premises.

In other parts of the Mill, the press (or packing) room had a hydraulic packing press, scales hanging from a beam and a supply of hoop iron, brown paper and filletting. The joiner's shop had bench, tools, circular saw and grindstone: a considerable quantity of alder and boxwood was stored, suggesting that the stock of trough edging, bobbins and other needs had been made on the premises. The machinery was cared for by a smith (or machine maker): his shop had anvil and block, hammers, bellows and much other equipment, whilst in the nearby oil shop was kept a supply of grease and sperm oil. Callers would be received, business discussed and the books made up in the counting house, a long and narrow room which seems to have been quite comfortably furnished as well as having the office equipment of the period.

About two hundred people were employed at Trafalgar Mill,⁵⁶ who can be divided into the following (approximate) groupings: there were some twenty workers on both the card and the line rooms, and thirty reelers in the reeling rooms. The spinning rooms each had a supervisor and a senior worker, and there was a total complement of fifty-five spinners and a similar number of doffers. Another twelve persons were employed around the premises.

Wage rates for the employees in the card, line and spinning rooms were based on a 60-hour week. The supervisors were paid 20s. to 30s. per 60-hour week, card and line room workers 5s. 3d. to 5s. 9d., spinners 5s. 9d. to 6s. 6d., doffers 4s. 3d. to 4s. 9d. Reelers were on a piece rate of $1\frac{7}{8}$ d. or 2d. per reel. Amongst the rest of the workers was a man who must have been the mill foreman or overseer. He was by far the highest paid employee, his remuneration depending on the production of the previous week. As this varied, his earnings ranged between £2 10s. 0d. and £3 15s. 0d. per week. In addition were two skilled men, probably the joiner and the smith, earning 20s. 8d. and 21s. 9d. per 60-hour week, some flaxdressers and warehousemen, and three apprentices, Boyle, Mennell and Pitts, sons of three of the four partners of Boyle Gill. At the time of the 1851 Census, Humphrey Boyle entered his son James, then aged 15, as “mechanic” a term sometimes used for an artisan or apprentice; William Mennell entered his son Thomas, aged 14, as “machine maker”, whilst James Pitts stated that his son Henry, aged 15, was a flaxmill apprentice. As an example of their pay, James Boyle’s was raised from 5s. per 60-hour week to 6s. in the week ending 9 August 1851 and to 7s. per week a year later.

The Mill was open for at least 60 hours per week. The supervisory and skilled staff and the apprentices worked the full period and often put in overtime, but it is impossible to see any consistent pattern in the hours worked by the other employees, such as those in the card, line and spinning rooms. Sometimes a fair proportion worked the full week, but amongst the rest were enormous variations, for which the explanation is not known.

There was some respite from work at holiday times: the mill closed for at least one day at Christmas 1851 (Christmas Day being on a Thursday) and in the following year the wages book was made up to Friday 24 December instead of the usual Saturday. The workers put in short hours in the weeks before and after Easter in 1852, whilst at

⁵⁶ The wages book, from which the information on employees, hours and wages is extracted, is made up in the handwriting of Humphrey Boyle throughout the period, with the exception of two or three weeks.

Whitsuntide, though the senior staff were in for five days, many of the rest only attended on three and even two days of that week. Two people, however, put in extremely long hours at the holiday periods: the joiner and the smith, presumably doing maintenance work when the mill was not in production.

The principal product of the mill was spun flax, for sale to the weavers; a few warps were also produced, but whether there was any additional trading, for instance in dressed flax, is not known. There is no information either on overheads or on the cost of raw materials.

Interwoven with work at Jack Lane and Trafalgar Mills were other interests and activities. Then as now the difficulties and recessions in trade were reported in the press; for instance, trade was generally poor in the summer of 1842, and the flax spinners of Leeds and district met under the chairmanship of H. C. Marshall to consider a proposal that the mills should go on short time. It was reported that the plan would go into effect the following week,⁵⁷ though whether this actually occurred seems doubtful, as, according to Marshall's notes, he did not get sufficient signatories.⁵⁸ Boyle was at the meeting and agreed to the suggestion, though of the twenty-six firms listed, Boyle Gill was one of the few having no spindles idle, one large and six small firms being similarly placed.⁵⁹

The year 1847 also was a period of depressed trade and accumulated stocks. On Friday 23 April, three employers described as "some of the most constant and considerate in the district" posted notices in their mills, announcing that the wages of flax reelers would be reduced from the following Monday "to those paid by the leading firms". The three employers concerned were Wilkinson and Co. of Goodman Street, Holdsworth and Co. of Victoria Mills and Boyle Gill. The reelers, about 10 per cent of the work force, went on strike the day following the announcement, and as they were an essential part of the total spinning process, all the employees, some 1500 in all, were thrown out of work.⁶⁰ The workers' committee, said to include some people from outside the trade, claimed that the proposed wage reduction was from 1½d. to 1¼d. per reel, though the employers said it was not so large, it then being quite usual to calculate sums on the split farthing.

⁵⁷ *L.M.*, 16 July 1842.

⁵⁸ Marshall Papers, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.

⁵⁹ Note on the differing sizes of firms: the largest, Marshall's, had a total of 31,088 spindles, the next 18,086. The smallest had 600 only. Estimates in Marshall Papers, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.

⁶⁰ *L.M.*, 1, 8, 15, 22 May, 12, 26 June 1847.

The reelers are said to have had the sympathy of Boyle's wife, Ann. On 8 May, the *Leeds Mercury* published a letter from the strike committee which stated "We are glad that Messrs Boyle and Co., who originally joined the other two firms in the resolution to lower wages, have commenced work on the old terms". Whether Ann brought her influence to bear, or what scheme was devised to keep Trafalgar Mill working, will probably never be known, but it is possible that a smaller firm could be more adaptable than the larger ones. Fortunately, Boyle Gill's workforce did not suffer the privation that occurred amongst some families during the eight weeks' stoppage at the other mills.

Boyle Gill appear to have been working normally until the end of 1852, but a combination of adverse circumstances arose which forced the firm into bankruptcy at the end of March 1853, and the partnership was perforce dissolved.⁶¹ The traditional reasons for the failure were three: first, one of the partners, without the authority of the others, ordered additional machinery when the firm had not the capacity to pay for it and when trade was not sufficiently buoyant to put it into use; secondly, another member of the firm had expressed the wish to leave the partnership and therefore to withdraw his capital; and thirdly, a change was proposed in the tenancy: whereas rent had previously been paid in arrears, it was in future to be paid in advance, making two lots of rent due immediately.

A study of the available information suggests that the traditional reasons were broadly correct. Charles Charnock, who owned the nearby Perseverance Mill as well as Trafalgar Mill, had died on 11 November 1852. So far as Perseverance Mill was concerned, Charnock's executors pressed the tenant for rent that was due, and, as he was unable to meet the demand, "accepted" the machinery and contents of the mill in settlement.⁶² Presumably similar pressure was put on the tenant of Trafalgar Mill, John Wilkinson, who in turn would ask the sub-tenants Boyle Gill for payment. The notice of the appointment of assignees⁶³ lists Wilkinson together with John Batley,⁶⁴ machine maker, and John Philip Frank⁶⁵ of Bradford, merchant. A further announcement a fortnight later⁶⁶ gave notice of the sale of the contents of Trafalgar Mill, some of the machinery being described as "quite new". The sale was held on 28, 29 and 30 April 1853.

⁶¹ *L.M.*, 2 April 1853.

⁶² Agreement Jessop/Nussey 16 January 1855. L.C.A. DB/5/94.

⁶³ *L.M.*, 2 April 1853.

⁶⁴ John Batley, of Peter Fairbairn and Co., Leeds.

⁶⁵ J. P. Frank of Burghardt, Aders and Co., Bermondsey (Bradford) and Manchester, yarn merchants.

⁶⁶ *L.M.*, 16 April 1853.

(c) *Boyle and Son, Trafalgar Row to West Park Ring Road, 1853-1964.*

Whatever the difficulties and distress of 1853, life had to go on. There is, unfortunately, little information of the next five or six years, but so far as is known, Humphrey Boyle made no attempt to return to flax spinning: instead he re-established himself through his original branch of the trade. He is listed in the next *Directory* as a flax and hemp dresser in Trafalgar Row, near the mill he had previously occupied. Before long he moved to premises at No. 40 Mill Hill, on the opposite side of the river.⁶⁷

At some point during these years, Boyle started trading in flax and hemp yarns, and products such as canvas, ropes and twine. This move towards merchanting may have been fortuitous, though it may have been due, in part at least, to an astute assessment of the needs and opportunities then existing in the trade. Whatever the reason, his enterprise at this time laid the foundation on which the firm was to work for many years to come. It is possible that Boyle's son James served an apprenticeship in engineering after the closure of Trafalgar Mill, but whether or not he left the flax trade for a while, he was certainly with his father in 1859, when more information becomes available in the form of ledgers and account books. Soon after this date he was taken into partnership, drawing interest on a small amount of capital, and receiving half the profits.

There were some 150 trading accounts on the books in 1859. It has been possible to identify many of these firms, and as only a few of them were in Leeds, there was probably in addition a local cash trade for which no record has survived,⁶⁸ but for which James would be responsible when his father was away from Leeds.⁶⁹ Travelling accounts for the years 1860-1863 record regular visits to various parts of the West Riding, to Lancashire, Newcastle, the Midlands and the Potteries, sometimes for a week at a time, and usually at three-monthly intervals. Fares averaged £28 per annum during this four-year period. The purpose of Boyle's calls on his customers was two-fold: he obtained fresh orders, but he also collected outstanding debts. Whilst some accounts were of course settled by cheque, bills and postal orders, a great many were paid in cash at the times of these visits. For example, Boyle spent five days in November 1863 in the Colne,

⁶⁷ Rate demand note July 1856. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/24; subsequent *Directories*.

⁶⁸ Except for (possibly) many cash book entries for sums inscribed as "from James".

⁶⁹ Enumerators' Returns, 1861 Census – James Boyle's occupation given as "Flax warehouse manager".

Blackburn and Rochdale areas of Lancashire; he visited 16 ropemakers and recorded receipts of £184 18s. od. By contrast, his expenses amounted to £2 15s. 6d.⁷⁰

The year 1864 was to prove a watershed in the affairs of the family. It was the beginning of a new era in that James Boyle was married at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds to Mary Laverack, who had recently gained her teacher's certificate in London after serving a seven years' apprenticeship as a pupil teacher at the school run by the Chapel in Basinghall Street.⁷¹ But the year was also the end of the old era, in that four months after James's marriage, Humphrey Boyle died on 2 December, some six weeks after his seventieth birthday. He was buried at the General Cemetery, Woodhouse (now St. George's Fields); his estate was proved at £3146 5s. 6d. on which duty at the rate of 1d. in the £ was to become payable on the death of his widow. All his money was in the firm, with the exception of £525 invested in a Mortgage of the Improvement Rates (i.e. a local authority investment) and some shares in the Oriental and General Bath Company of Leeds Ltd. (the original Cookridge Street Baths).⁷² Under his will, which had been made seven years earlier, he left his estate to his wife for life, including the business, in which James was to act as her assistant. At Ann's death, James was to inherit the business, otherwise all his children were to benefit equally, James being charged to pay his sisters their shares within eighteen months of their mother's death.⁷³

Great changes took place in the flax and hemp trade over the years, changes which had their effect on small firms such as Boyle and Son as well as on the larger ones. Care, judgement and technical knowledge must have been needed in large measure if a business were to be carried forward, especially when the only capital had to be accumulated from amongst the immediate family. Whilst a detailed analysis of Boyle and Son's affairs during the hundred years or so since Humphrey's death is quite beyond the scope of this article, some indication of the firm's development and activities can be given.

Capital consisted of the money each partner had in the firm together with the loans made by other members of the family. Interest was paid on these monies at the rate of 5% per annum; that of the

⁷⁰ Ledger and Cash Book. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/25 and 30.

⁷¹ Mill Hill Chapel Records, 1859, 1860, 1864.

⁷² Probate copy, Will of Humphrey Bellamy Boyle. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/18; List of Shareholders, Oriental etc. Bath Co. *Thoresby Society Library* 22 C 6.

⁷³ Emma (1827-1909) m. Joseph Atkinson; Mary (1829-1916); Ann (1839-1936) teacher's certificate, Whitelands College, Chelsea 1860; taught in Leeds; Catherine b. 1842 had died in 1861 at which date she was senior pupil teacher at the girls' school at Marshall's Mills.

partners was adjusted by an equal share of the profits or losses⁷⁴ and the sums withdrawn for living expenses were deducted, the balance remaining in the firm as working capital. The balance of 1864 was struck as at 2 December, the date of Humphrey's death, when he had £2621 in the firm and his son James £253. Mrs. Ann Boyle had £470 loan capital, making a total of £3344.⁷⁵

Ann was the senior partner on her husband's death, but James, her assistant, had the day-to-day running of the business. She is said to have insisted on daily reports, but it was eventually agreed that, as from 30 June 1873, their partnership should cease. James bought out his mother, paying some £1850. Early the following year a deed was completed giving legal force to the verbal agreement of the previous summer;⁷⁶ Ann withdrew £500 of her own money. A balance was taken on 30 June 1874, about a year after James had obtained sole control of the firm; he had just bought building land in Oil Mill Lane, Headingley and was negotiating for a property in Swinegate. His capital was £3500, whilst the re-organisation of his mother's affairs had left her with £5000 loan capital, making a total capital for the firm of £8500.⁷⁷

Customers and Suppliers

Something of the type and range of business being carried out can be learned through identifying the firm's customers, listed in the balance sheets of 1864 and 1874, and this has been possible through addresses in the firm's books,⁷⁸ or through *Directories* of the period. The great majority were rope and twine manufacturers, principally buying hemp; the rest, requiring different fibres and products, were flax spinners, linen manufacturers, sack and bag makers, cloth-cap makers (needing a canvas for interlining); builders wanted scaffolding ropes, joiners wanted sash cords, whilst special threads were required by boot manufacturers and upholsterers. These customers were in the north of England: of those in the West Riding many were in the area between Hunslet and Wakefield, probably making ropes for the coalfield, whilst a Selby firm advertised "ropes for home and

⁷⁴ There is one (known) exception: in 1864 the partners carried a loss proportionate to the amount of capital held, not by equal amounts.

⁷⁵ Balance sheet of Boyle and Son, 1864 by John Routh, accountant. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/18.

⁷⁶ Deed of Dissolution of Partnership, Boyle and Son, 1873; *The London Gazette*, 14 February 1873. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/13.

⁷⁷ Balance sheet of James Boyle, 1874 by Simpson and Beevers, accountants. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/17.

⁷⁸ Hackling Account book including index of Ropers c. 1862. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/8.

export... for collieries and mines... driving ropes for main gearing". The impression that rope-making was a skill handed on within families is strong: for instance, in the West Riding, Boyle and Son had three customers named Oddy, three named Land, three named Bland; there were six named Worth, two in Stanningley and one each in Horbury, Stanley, Pudsey and Hunslet; there were three named Bentley in Nidderdale. At this date nearly all ropers seem to have worked independently: partnerships were rare though a few firms had the suffix "and Son".

At the time of Humphrey Boyle's death, the bulk of the firm's supplies were obtained fairly locally: from Leeds, Rotherham and Selby, some from Lancashire and considerable quantities from upper Nidderdale. Ten years later these centres were still important sources, though supplemented by purchases from Dundee and Leven.⁷⁹

By the turn of the century there had been many changes. Mrs. Ann Boyle had died in 1889 and James had taken three of his four sons to work in the business, Charles Humphrey in 1884, James in 1890 and Philip in 1900,⁸⁰ the latter having previously qualified as a civil engineer; all the boys had left school at the age of fourteen. In 1905 James took the three brothers into partnership.⁸¹ He died four years later, in 1909, and, as his widow died the following year, the firm had passed to another generation by the date of the balance sheet of 31 March 1911, which showed that James's money, now divided amongst his nine surviving children, had almost wholly been left in the firm as loan capital; this, together with that of Humphrey's daughters, totalled about £12,000; with the partners' money, the firm had a working capital of some £25,000.⁸²

Sales in 1901 were about £33,000: ten years later they had risen some 155%,⁸³ an increase probably explained by buoyant trading conditions and a very large increase in the number of customers. There were additional and varied openings: for instance, an important connection with the carpet trade, requiring jute yarns for carpet backings, and, in a very different field, a lively trade in binder twine reflected the now widespread use of the mechanical reaper. An ever increasing proportion of supplies came from the continent, though goods were still coming from Scotland, Lancashire and Yorkshire, in

⁷⁹ Balance sheets of 1864 and 1874, Cash book. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/30.

⁸⁰ Their handwriting appears regularly in ledgers and other books from these dates.

⁸¹ Deed of partnership dated 15 March 1905, property of H. J. Boyle.

⁸² Copy, Will of James Boyle, and Balance sheet 1911. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/20 and

41.

⁸³ Balance sheets 1901 and 1911. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/41.

some cases from firms known to Humphrey Boyle some fifty and more years previously.

During these years, in 1878, Fell Beck Mill near Pateley Bridge had become the property of Boyle and Son. There had been a long connection over the centuries between Nidderdale and the flax and hemp trades:⁸⁴ by the middle of the nineteenth century the activities of the firms in the upper dale were concentrated on spinning and rope making. One of the firms with which Boyle and Son were trading prior to Humphrey Boyle's death was that of Edward Bentley, then a rope and twine manufacturer at Smelthouses. By 1871 he had moved to Fell Beck Mill, an old corn mill which he converted to flax and hemp spinning.⁸⁵ The mill dam, with its system of goits, had sufficient water power for the corn mill, but Bentley is said to have found the supply insufficient to drive his newly-installed machinery. He went to great expense to improve the system, an expense which in the long run he was unable to meet.

Bentley's normal trading debt with Boyle and Son was around £30, but the balance sheet of 1874 shows him as owing £1106 11s. od., by far and away the largest debt of this period. Two years later this sum had been reduced somewhat, but in 1878 the mill was shown as Boyle and Son's property, valued at £1200.⁸⁶ Additional machinery was installed for spinning, and a rope walk became operational about 1885. The spinning of flax was given up some ten years later, hemp only being dealt with until all spinning ceased in 1910-12. The rope walk, where ropes, twines and cordage of various weights were produced, continued in operation until 1965. Its management always presented problems; for instance it was difficult of access and it was several miles from a railway station. In the early years of this century, one of the firm's partners went into Nidderdale once weekly. He travelled to Dacre Banks by train, where he was met by a pony and trap which took him the last five miles to the mill, and to visit other firms in the vicinity. Later the mill was leased to ropers who liked to work independently: the last of these was Allan Bentley, who was there from 1928 until his death in 1959. For the next few years, Boyle and Son produced specialised lines at Fell Beck: the final closure, in 1965, came about in part because the trade had declined to such an extent in the dale that it was impossible to find work people with the requisite skills. Fell Beck Mill has now taken on an entirely new

⁸⁴ B. Jennings (ed.), *A History of Nidderdale* (1967).

⁸⁵ Enumerators' Returns 1861 and 1871 Censuses.

⁸⁶ Balance sheet 1878. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/28.

function, one of Humphrey's Boyle's great grandsons living in the Mill House whilst the old mill buildings are used for hand loom weaving.

Premises

The firm variously entitled Boyle Carr and Co., Boyle Gill and Co. and Boyle and Son occupied a number of different premises in Leeds over the years, all of which were, until the mid-twentieth century, within a few hundred yards of Leeds Bridge. Mention has been made already of the ones south of the river: Jack Lane Mill, Trafalgar Mill and the warehouse in Trafalgar Row, but after the move to No. 40 Mill Hill in 1856, the firm's main premises were to remain to the north side of the river.

All these properties were rented, but late in 1869, James Boyle and his mother, who were still in partnership, had the opportunity of buying 40 Mill Hill (which by this date had been re-designated No. 39 Swinegate). James, it seems, would have preferred to obtain larger premises, but his offer for a mill in the nearby Isle of Cynder was refused;⁸⁷ consequently Boyle and Son bought No. 39 Swinegate, a mortgage being raised the same day.⁸⁸ Some three years later, when James had sole control of the firm, various small properties were rented or bought: a ropewalk, a small warehouse near Jack Lane, and a flax dressing shop in Fleece Lane, off Meadow Lane.⁸⁹ James continued to employ flax dressers for some time, especially, it is said, those who were beyond the age when they could turn to another trade; it was presumably to these addresses that this part of the business was transferred, thus making more space available at No. 39 Swinegate.

However, it must have been apparent by this time that the main premises would have to be moved, if only because extensions to the Leeds New Station and its approaches were planned by the N.E. and the London and N.W. Railway Companies, alterations which would affect the buildings at the junction of Mill Hill and Swinegate, including those of Boyle and Son. James Boyle negotiated the purchase of a property which, though also in Swinegate, was on the lower side of the existing railway bridge. An old iron foundry was on the site: this was cleared and new premises built, into which the firm moved in 1877; No. 39 Swinegate was sold to the Railway Companies

⁸⁷ Detail listed in solicitor's account 1870. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/14; *L.M.*, 22 January 1870. The property was possibly Concordia Mills.

⁸⁸ Solicitors' accounts, 1870. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/14; W.Y.R.D. 637/753/892 and 893.

⁸⁹ Balance sheets. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/28; W.Y.R.D. 708/318/387 and 739/36/44.

and eventually demolished when New Station Street and the Dark Arches were built.⁹⁰

The new warehouse, No. 7 Swinegate, covered some 280 sq. yds. and had a frontage of 40 feet: to the rear ran one of the goits from King's Mill. It had three floors; the main entrance was flanked on the one side by offices and on the other by a shop for the retail trade.⁹¹ Here the firm operated from 1877 to 1904, when the Corporation bought the property on account of extensive changes they were planning from the south-west side of Swinegate through the Isle of Cynder to the river. As this sale went through, Boyle and Son became the Corporation's tenants in the nearby King's Mill; the first lease was for two years, which was later extended up to 1911.⁹²

The problem of future accommodation must always have been under review during the period at King's Mill. It was considered essential for the firm to remain in the same area, not only for the convenience of customers, but also because of the proximity of both the railways and the canals, by which goods were transported. Eventually a new site became available, formed under the improvement schemes as an extension to Sovereign Street, and here new premises were built. The site was larger than that at No. 7 Swinegate, being of 407 sq. yds.; the new building was of four floors and the move took place here in 1911.⁹³ Some forty years later, a building which had originally been the Hunslet Mechanics' Institute was bought and converted into additional workshops.⁹⁴

To bring this note on premises up to the present day, No. 39 Swinegate was vacated after twenty years because of an improvement scheme, whilst No. 7 Swinegate was vacated after thirty years for a similar reason. After the temporary arrangement at King's Mill, what was to be Boyle and Son's experience at 20 Sovereign Street? A pattern of events had, it seems, become established, for after fifty years, in 1965, a further move had to be made: the reason? – the properties fell

⁹⁰ Schedule of title deeds re an estate in Swinegate, and solicitors' accounts, 1877. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/16; W.Y.R.D. 793/184/22 and 747/656/778; Map and book of reference, Leeds New Station, 1873 (site 147 being 39 Swinegate). L.C.A. LC/Eng/Box 2.

⁹¹ Plans for a warehouse... C. Fowler, architect. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/39; photograph, Swinegate from Bridge-end 1904. L.R.L., negative 244.

⁹² Agreements of tenancy City of Leeds and James Boyle 1904 and 1906. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/39.

⁹³ Hepper's Catalogue, 1909, 57th Sale of Corporation Surplus Property. *Thoresby Society Library* 39 D 2. Specifications... for warehouse in Sovereign St. L.C.A. Acc. 2162/38.

⁹⁴ W.Y.R.D. 143/911/411 (1951).

within improvement schemes planned by the Corporation. As usual, time had brought many changes: there was no longer the need to be near the city centre or the railways and the canals. It was usual now for goods to be moved by road as indeed were customers. So for the first time in its history, the firm moved from the proximity of Leeds Bridge to a site some five miles away, on the Clayton Wood Industrial Estate, West Park Ring Road.

Recent Times

The first World War brought severe trading difficulties; after 1918, business relationships were gradually re-established with Continental firms, and supplies from such countries as Italy and the Balkans, as well from the Indian sub-continent, started to come in again. However, every firm dealing in flax and other fibres was having to consider the effect of a new development: the invention of man-made fibres. As natural fibres became less easy to obtain, the range of the new product improved and the supply increased. The change was gradual, but it called for considerable tenacity and foresight amongst those in the older trades. Some of Boyle and Son's customers changed the nature of their business, whilst other firms closed down. The change affected many goods, and indeed many aspects of life: for instance the manufacture of footwear progressed to new methods; new packaging materials were introduced; fire hose, ropes and twines, bands and threads began to be made of the new material. The carpet trade gradually moved to new methods of production. What was to take the place of Boyle and Son's traditional trade: how could the firm's knowledge and expertise be adapted and used in the mid-twentieth century?

A great deal of thought over a prolonged period was devoted to this problem: eventually, largely through the initiative of H. J. Boyle,⁹⁵ a new line was developed, yet one which was within the field of natural fibres. It had been known prior to the second World War that great improvements were being made in the spinning and weaving of sisal, and by 1946 floor coverings of good quality were being made of this material. Boyle and Son engaged in the marketing of this product for nearly twenty years, in conjunction with Irish and later Continental manufacturers. Meantime they had been developing a new use for another fibre, and wall coverings are now being made from jute; it is on this trade and its derivatives that the firm now concentrates. The traditional trade, in yarns and twines, was finally terminated in 1960.

⁹⁵ Son of James Boyle who entered the partnership with his brothers in 1905.

During the period of adaptation and renewal there were changes in the partnership: C. H. Boyle died in 1949, James in 1953 and Philip in 1963. Reorganisation in 1964 left the status and structure of the firm changed from a partnership to a private company, with H. J. Boyle and his son to carry forward the firm of Boyle and Son under trading conditions and in a world situation which would be unrecognisable to the generations preceding them.

THE YORKSHIRE LADIES' COUNCIL OF EDUCATION, 1871-91

by

ISOBEL JENKINS, M.A.

Origins

A Ladies' Honorary Council of the Yorkshire Board of Education was formally established, with Mrs. Baines as president, at a meeting held on 16 January 1871 and attended by only ten of the seventy subscribers to the Council. A Ladies' Committee of the Yorkshire Board of Education had existed before this date and a brief account of the character of the Yorkshire Board and, in particular, of its Ladies' Committee is therefore necessary to an understanding of the nature of the work undertaken by the Ladies' Honorary Council which, after 1875, became the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education.

The Yorkshire Board of Education originated as the Leeds Educational Board, established in 1859 by the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes to organise the Oxford Local and the Society of Arts preliminary and elementary examinations. In 1861 the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, perhaps recognising the advantages of co-operation with other organisations involved with adult education, allowed the Leeds arrangement to be dismantled in favour of a West Riding Educational Board. The members of the new Board were drawn not only from the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes and the Leeds Mechanics' Institute, but also from the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society and the Leeds Church Institute. The link between the Board and the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes was particularly strong since the Secretary from 1861 to 1866, Barnett Blake, serviced both bodies. Perhaps for this reason, as much as for economy, the Annual Reports of the West Riding Educational Board were published with those of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes. By 1862 the West Riding Educational Board was organising throughout Yorkshire examinations conducted on behalf of Oxford, Cambridge and Durham Universities, the Society of Arts and the Department of Science and Art at South Kensington. The West Riding Educational Board was itself disbanded in 1867 and its functions assumed by a new body, the Yorkshire Board of Education, with still wider interests than those of its predecessors. The

reports of the Yorkshire Board of Education were now printed independently of those of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, but links between the two organisations still remained strong as Henry Sales, Barnett Blake's successor, remained Secretary to the Yorkshire Board of Education and agent of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes. Not surprisingly, Sales himself described the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes and the Yorkshire Board of Education as "county associations which work in cordial co-operation".¹

The Yorkshire Board was involved not only with the organisation of examinations, but with "the education of adults over the age of 12 years . . . and the promotion of scientific instruction". The considerable commitment of the Yorkshire Board to this latter function is indicated by its provision of training courses to prepare teachers for the Science and Art Department examinations and by its persistent attempts, in the face of many difficulties, to establish a Science College for the county.² The Yorkshire Board enjoyed the support of some notable and influential members of Leeds and Yorkshire society who had not previously been directly connected with either the West Riding Educational Board or the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes. Lord Frederick Cavendish, M.P., became the President and Dr. Heaton, a physician at Leeds Infirmary, one of its Vice-Presidents. Heaton was actively involved with social improvement and educational development in Leeds both through the Conversation Club, the short-lived Leeds Improvement Society, and through the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society of which he was Librarian in 1865 and President from 1868 to 1872.³

In her first report after the establishment of the Ladies' Honorary Council, Mrs. Frances Elizabeth Lupton, the General Honorary Secretary, attributed the founding of the Ladies' Committee of the Yorkshire Board of Education to the initiative of the West Riding Educational Board which, in 1866, asked that a meeting of ladies

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction and the Advancement of Science*, 1871-5, P.P. 1872, XXV, 425. Information on the West Riding Educational Board from Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, *Annual Reports*, 1861-6.

² H. H. Sales, *On Technical Education in Yorkshire*, a report presented to the President and Committee of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, 1868, passim; *Report of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction* P.P. 1872, XXV, 426, 428.

³ E. Kitson Clark, *A History of the 100 Years of Life of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* (1924), 77, 230; E. Kitson Clark, *Conversation Club* (1939), 11, 16.

interested in education be held at "Claremont", Dr. Heaton's house. The West Riding Educational Board appears to have hoped that, as a result of this meeting, the Cambridge University Local Examinations for girls, first held in 1865 with Sheffield as the only Yorkshire centre, might also be organised in Leeds. However, Mrs. Lupton's explanation of the founding of the Ladies' Committee probably simplifies a much more complicated series of events, in which she herself was not personally involved, since it is hard to see why the West Riding Educational Board should ask Dr. and Mrs. Heaton to call such a meeting when Dr. Heaton was not directly involved in the work of the Board at this stage.

What is clear is that Mrs. Fanny Heaton was an acquaintance of Miss Emily Davies who was already well known for her activities elsewhere, notably for her efforts to persuade the Schools Inquiry Commission to extend its terms of reference to include girls' schools, and for her success in opening the Cambridge Local Examinations to girls, first as an experiment in 1865, and subsequently on a more permanent basis in 1867.⁴ Dr. Heaton states in his *Journal* that numerous letters had passed between Mrs. Heaton and Miss Davies and that Mrs. Heaton had done much to help "Miss Davies in making her object known in Leeds". Miss Davies and her friend Miss Elizabeth Garrett had stayed at "Claremont" in October 1865 after the Social Science Congress at Sheffield and it is to Miss Davies that Dr. Heaton attributed the initiative for the meeting held on 8 September 1866.

"Fanny had a large party of governesses of young ladies' schools assemble at Claremont to meet Mr. Fitch of the Royal Commission for School Inquiry, and Miss Davies, to advocate and discuss the subject of university middle class examinations for girls. This was arranged at the wish of Miss Davies . . ."⁵

The Heatons had also invited Henry Sales, then still Secretary of the West Riding Educational Board, to the meeting and it was perhaps inevitable that once the meeting had resolved to form a committee of Leeds ladies to superintend the examinations for girls to be held in the city in December, the West Riding Educational Board, and Sales in particular, would be asked to undertake much of the necessary administrative work on behalf of that Committee.

The Cambridge Local Examinations were held in Leeds in 1866, 1867 and 1868. However, Mrs. Heaton made it clear in a letter to Mrs.

⁴ J. Kamm, *Hope Deferred* (1965), 184-98.

⁵ J. D. Heaton, *Journal*, 1864-69, 114-16, 183-4. This source was made available to me through the courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Payne.

Lupton in May 1871⁶ that no permanent committee of ladies had existed during these years, adding that she herself had superintended the examinations with the help of an *ad hoc* group convened on each occasion. She also pointed out that these *ad hoc* groups of ladies were considered by Henry Sales to constitute the Ladies' Committee of the Yorkshire Board of Education. Her assessment of Sales's attitude is confirmed by the first report of the Yorkshire Board, issued in 1868, which lists a committee of ladies presided over by Mrs. Heaton and to which is ascribed the responsibility for conducting elementary examinations for working girls on behalf of the Yorkshire Board.⁷

A few of the members of the group of "governesses" who had been present at the meeting in "Claremont" in September 1866 were proprietors of middle-class girls' schools in Leeds; for example, Miss Clara Tootal who, with her sisters, kept a Ladies Seminary at St. Mary's Mount, Clarendon Road.⁸ Like many other schoolmistresses and middle-class ladies throughout the country, they were eager to raise the standard of work being done in the girls' secondary schools, thus enabling girls to enter for the Cambridge Local Examinations. Their ultimate aim was the creation of some form of higher education for women so that recognised qualifications would be available to intending women teachers. Miss Emily Davies had already set up a Schoolmistresses' Association in London in 1866, and a similar organisation was established in Liverpool by Miss Anne Jemima Clough later in the same year. Some of the ladies and "governesses" from Leeds were present at a meeting of schoolmistresses held in Manchester in March 1867, at which Miss Clough proposed that lectures given by members of the Inspectorate or by men from the Universities be organised for the benefit of women. Her proposal gained the support of the Rev. George and Mrs. Josephine Butler of Liverpool and, as a result of her initiative, Mr. James Stuart was asked to give his famous lectures on Astronomy in the autumn of 1867, not only in Liverpool, but also in Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds where they were organised by Miss Tootal. On 1 and 2 November 1867, after James Stuart's lectures had finished, a meeting was held at "Claremont" to consider what further action might be appropriate.

⁶ Leeds City Archives, *Yorkshire Ladies' Council Collection* (hereafter Y.L.C.C.) 110, letter from Mrs. Heaton to Mrs. Lupton, May 15 (1871?).

⁷ Yorkshire Board of Education, *Annual Report*, (hereafter Y.B.E.A.R.), 1868, 4. The list includes Miss Heaton, Mrs. James Kitson, Miss Theodosia Marshall, Mrs. Bickersteth, Mrs. Baines, Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Beecroft and Mrs. Huth of Huddersfield.

⁸ T. Porter (ed.), *Topographical and Commercial Directory of Leeds and Neighbourhood*, 1872-73, 273.

The ladies present included not only Mrs. Heaton and Miss Tootal from Leeds, but also influential ladies from other towns such as Mrs. Josephine Butler and Miss Clough of Liverpool and Miss Elizabeth Gloyn and Miss Elizabeth Wolstenholme from Manchester. Frederick Myers of Cambridge was also present together with James Bryce and Joshua Fitch. The meeting formally established a North of England Council for the Promotion of the Higher Education of Women, which organised more courses and lectures by university men during the spring of 1868. The North of England Council met again at "Claremont" on 15 and 16 April 1868, and, partly as a result of a Memorial addressed to the University of Cambridge, the Cambridge Examinations for women over the age of 18, "the Higher Locals", were established later that year. The first examinations took place in Leeds and London in July 1869 and served initially as a test for women intending to teach in girls' secondary schools.⁹

The success of the lecture programme and the responsibility of arranging and supervising the Cambridge examinations for women appears to have led Mrs. Heaton to seek to widen the representation on her Committee and to establish it on a more secure footing. At a meeting in March 1869 in the Philosophical Hall, Leeds,¹⁰ the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association was established. The new association involved some ladies not previously concerned with Mrs. Heaton's "Ladies' Committee", including Mrs. Frances Elizabeth Lupton, the wife of Francis Lupton, a member of the West Riding Educational Board, the Yorkshire Board of Education, and later, Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Yorkshire College of Science, and Miss Lucy Wilson, daughter of Thomas Wilson, a Vice-President of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes and founder of the Conversation Club of Leeds. Such people were able to offer to the work of promoting the higher education of women, not only much needed financial help, but also the wider support of those professional and business families in Leeds who were involved already in educational work in the city and elsewhere.

On 6 April 1869 Henry Sales invited the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association to become the Ladies' Standing Committee of the Yorkshire Board of Education with responsibility for organising and supervising the University examinations for females. The ladies

⁹ J. Kamm, *op. cit.*, 201; S. C. Lemoine, *The North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, 1867-1875/6*, University of Manchester, unpublished M.Ed. thesis (1968), 73-9 and 132-40.

¹⁰ Leeds Ladies' Educational Association (hereafter L.L.E.A.), *Minute Book*, 1868-72, Meeting 10 March 1869.

accepted Sales's offer and thereby "undertook to perform with regard to these examinations such work as the Board may assign to it". It was the members of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association, and in particular Miss Wilson, who helped the Yorkshire Board to transform its Ladies' Committee into the Ladies' Honorary Council of the Board with the intention of involving middle-class ladies from other parts of the county.

The Leeds Ladies' Educational Association, itself having subscribed to the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, ceased to depend in any way upon the Yorkshire Board of Education, the body from which it had sprung, after about 1872.¹¹ However, it continued to organise the lectures of the University Extension Scheme until 1877 when this work was taken over by the Yorkshire College. The Association finally disbanded itself in 1880.¹²

The early character and work of the Ladies' Honorary Council was inevitably largely determined by the organisations from which it had stemmed and, in particular, by the role envisaged for it by the Yorkshire Board of Education. However, the Council also reflected the concern of middle-class ladies throughout the nation to secure better educational opportunities for middle-class females and its work was characterised by the desire to be involved with, and to implement locally, these more widely felt aspirations.

Early Work

In the early part of 1870 the Yorkshire Board of Education had resolved to form a Ladies' Council so that "some comprehensive movement for the improvement of female education of all classes" might be established, and through which ladies from all parts of Yorkshire might be able to "aid the great work of their fellow women".¹³ The Council did not hold its first meeting until 1871, when Mrs. Frances Elizabeth Lupton was elected General Honorary

¹¹ L.L.E.A. *Annual Report*, 1880, 13 and 14; L.L.E.A. *Minute Book*, Meetings of 17 March 1869 and 6 April 1869. For different interpretations of the relationship between the Yorkshire Board of Education, the L.L.E.A. and the Ladies' Honorary Council (hereafter L.H.C.), see N. A. Jepson, "Leeds and the Beginnings of University Adult Education", *Proc. Leeds. Phil. Soc.*, VIII, Part 3 (1957) 218; and M. H. Webster, *The Early Years of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education* (printed for private circulation, 1972), *passim*.

¹² N. A. Jepson, *op. cit.*, 228-30; L.L.E.A., *Minute Book of Examinations Committee*, Leeds City Archives, Y.L.C.C., 57. The Committee affiliated to the Y.L.C. in 1892

¹³ Y.B.E.A.R., 1870, 15-16.

Secretary. Since only ten ladies were present at this meeting¹⁴ it was difficult to set up the three Committees recommended by the Yorkshire Board and at the first meeting of each committee it was necessary to co-opt other lady subscribers. The work of the Ladies' Council during its first two years followed closely the scheme suggested by the Yorkshire Board of Education and was centred in Leeds. There were, however, unmistakable signs during this time that the Ladies' Council was beginning to develop interests and activities beyond those originally prescribed for it.

The first of the three standing committees was charged with the "improvement of the education of girls over the age of twelve years who have entered upon a life of labour as factory operatives, shop girls, domestic servants . . .". The results of the examinations taken by working girls at evening classes and arranged during the previous two years by the Ladies' Committee of the Yorkshire Board, showed a "lamentable deficiency in the most elementary knowledge" on the part of the pupils. The candidates were not only unable to express in writing the "commonest phrases used in daily conversation", but were also ignorant of the simplest matters in connection with food and clothing. The Ladies' Council was expected to encourage young working girls to attend evening classes to improve their general education and to spread a knowledge of the rudiments of the laws of health and domestic economy by arranging for simple lectures to be given in suitable localities. The elementary examinations conducted by the Council on 28 and 29 March 1871 in Leeds and Lockwood consisted of an inspection of pieces of needlework, a paper in arithmetic and the dictation of some sentences. Only 33 of the 50 candidates entered for the examination were actually tested. Prizes of books to the value of 10s., 7s. 6d. and 5s. were available to the best candidates, but most were won by girls who had attended the evening classes arranged at the Leeds Mechanics' Institute.¹⁵ This appears to be the sole examination of this type arranged by the Ladies' Honorary Council and little further interest seems to have been taken in the elementary education of working girls, at least in Leeds. In Wakefield, the Council continued for some time to arrange evening classes in which elementary subjects were taught. The Council may have felt

¹⁴ The ladies were Mrs. Baines (chairman), Mrs. Birchall, Miss Garlick, Miss Heaton, Mrs. Kitson, Mrs. James Kitson, Mrs. F. E. Lupton, Mrs. Trehwella (all from Leeds), Mrs. Salt from Bradford and Mrs. Edward Crossley from Halifax. Yorkshire Ladies' Council (hereafter Y.L.C.), *Minute Book*, Meeting of 15 January 1871.

¹⁵ L.H.C., *Annual Report*, 1871, 8-9; Leeds Mechanics' Institute, *Annual Report*, 1871-2, 10.

that the new Board Schools in Leeds were able to teach girls under the age of 12 years adequately, while the older girls could attend the well-run classes at the Leeds Mechanics' Institute. In addition, the need for lady examiners disappeared after 1874 when evening classes unconnected with day schools became eligible for government grant after satisfactory inspection.

To remedy girls' ignorance of matters relating to food and clothing, the Yorkshire Board arranged for an appropriate course of lectures to be arranged on "domestic physiology and the Laws of Health".¹⁶ In the spring of 1871 Dr. Braithwaite, a Leeds doctor who in 1865 had published the results of his inquiry into the high death rate in Leeds, and a Mr. Mason, a paid lecturer, gave talks in Leeds and Slaidburn. Mrs. Emily Christiana Kitson, wife of James Kitson, Jnr. (later Lord Airedale), who attended these lectures, pointed out the difficulties experienced by the working women in understanding them and suggested that a more personal approach was needed than was possible in a formal lecture delivered by a professional man. During the winter of 1871 and spring of 1872 a new scheme, suggested by Emily Kitson herself, was tried. An introductory lecture was delivered to a group of working women and mothers, and this was followed by a series of weekly classes on health conducted by ladies who had volunteered for the work. Three such groups of classes were organised in this way: by Emily Kitson herself, by Catherine Mary Buckton, wife of Joseph Buckton, woollen manufacturer of Moorland Terrace, Leeds, and by Mary Anne Baily, wife of Walter Baily, an Inspector of Schools. The classes were apparently well received and the reports to the Council were enthusiastic. A conference, held in November 1872 and sponsored by the Yorkshire Board, provided an opportunity to spread information about this work and to encourage more middle-class ladies to undertake it. However, there were no further volunteers and the same three ladies carried on with Emily Kitson's plan throughout the winter of 1872-3.

The second area of responsibility delegated by the Yorkshire Board to its Ladies' Council was the promotion of the Universities' local examinations for girls and women. In 1871 few schools sent their pupils to be examined and still fewer knew of the newly-instituted examinations for women. In the opinion of the Yorkshire Board an important part of the promotion of the examinations was their proper organisation and supervision. The arrangements for the Cambridge Local examinations were the formal responsibility of the Yorkshire

¹⁶ *Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction Report*, P.P. 1872, XXV, 427, evidence of H. H. Sales.

Board itself, but, since 1869, their immediate supervision and conduct had been in the hands of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association. However, the supervision of these examinations was a seasonal and not a particularly demanding part of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and it seems to have been left almost entirely to Miss Wilson,¹⁷ the Honorary Secretary. As Henry Sales pointed out to the meeting of the Standing Committee for Examinations of the Leeds Council held on 18 May 1871, this state of affairs did not accord with the requirements of either of the ancient Universities (the Oxford Locals for girls began in 1870), as each required a *committee* to organise and supervise the examinations at the local centre. Henry Sales and the Yorkshire Board of Education seem to have expected the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association to relinquish its responsibility towards the examinations which it had undertaken when no other Ladies' Committee had existed. Miss Wilson, herself a member of the Ladies' Council, was already a member of the Examinations Standing Committee, and it was hoped, therefore, that the transfer of this work to the Ladies' Council could take place smoothly. In Miss Wilson's absence from the meeting of 18 May, the Examinations Committee elected Mrs. Luccock as its Secretary, since a proper committee needed to be formed to prepare for the Oxford examinations later the same month. This action was explained by Mrs. Lupton in a letter to Miss Wilson in which she stressed the desire of the Committee to relieve Miss Wilson of the heavy responsibility she had previously carried. However, Miss Wilson recognised this ploy for what it was and letters were exchanged in which Mrs. Lupton attempted to soothe an angry and bitter "Miss Lucy". The exchange ended with Miss Wilson accusing the Committee of a *coup d'état* which, she said, lacked "the

¹⁷ Lucy Wilson was born in 1834. Her father, Thomas Wilson of Hilary Place, Leeds, was the auditor of the Aire-Calder Navigation Company. "Miss Lucy" had no connection with the Ladies' Committee of the Yorkshire Board of Education until the formal founding of the L.L.E.A. in 1869. (See her letter to Dr. Heaton of October 1871 in Leeds City Archives, Y.L.C.C., 109). However, in its early years she seems to have dominated the L.L.E.A. and there is much amusing information about her forceful character and high-handed actions as Honorary Secretary in L.L.E.A., *Minute Book* 1869-72, and in Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (1916), 82. She seems to have been closely involved with the founding of the Ladies' Honorary Council but she apparently severed her connections with it in 1872 to devote her attention to the lecture courses being run by the L.L.E.A. and the University Extension Committee in Leeds. In 1873, at the Annual Meeting of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, she gave a lecture entitled "Higher Education of Women". In 1876, after her father's death, Miss Wilson left Leeds, her financial position having been secured by a trust fund of £5,000. Leeds City Archives, *Wilson Papers* D.B./178/11 and 40.

one element necessary for success . . . where are your gendarmes and mitrailleurs? Are we to have barricades in Briggate and Boar Lane – and throw pots of petroleum at each other?”¹⁸

This controversy had the immediate and important result that, at a meeting of the Examinations Committee on 9 June, it was agreed that the Ladies’ Council would assume responsibility only for the new Oxford Examinations, the administration of the Cambridge Examinations being left with the Leeds Ladies’ Educational Association. The dispute was also responsible for the later view that the Leeds Ladies’ Educational Association and the Ladies’ Council were rival organisations. This does not seem to have been the case as there was much active co-operation between them. For example, Mrs. Frances Elizabeth Lupton was a very active member of the Leeds Ladies’ Educational Association, as well as of the Ladies’ Council, and it is interesting to note that she attended twenty-seven and was chairman of fifteen of the thirty-one committee and special meetings held by the Association between 1869 and 1872. In addition, Mrs. Annie Eddison, the Honorary Secretary of the Association from 1876 to 1880, was simultaneously a member of the executive committee of the Council. Even immediately after the dispute, Miss Wilson volunteered her services as secretary and librarian of the newly appointed Library Committee of the Ladies’ Council. Although this offer was accepted, she subsequently resigned from the Council in April 1872.

The members of the Yorkshire Board of Education were particularly concerned about the limited degree of success of candidates presenting themselves for these university examinations. In their view, the low standards reflected the inadequate preparation of candidates and the Board thus gave attention to how such candidates might gain “efficient assistance and direction in their studies”.¹⁹ The members of the Ladies’ Council suggested that since some candidates were too poor to buy books or lived too far away from shops and libraries, it would be appropriate to provide a lending library from which books could be borrowed by post. Such an arrangement was seen as being particularly useful to governesses preparing for the Cambridge women’s examinations. The local secretaries for these examinations, meeting at a conference in Leeds in January 1871, had considered and rejected a plan to establish just such a library. However, Mrs. Lupton

¹⁸ Leeds City Archives, Y.L.C.C., 108-10, letter from Henry Sales to Mrs. Lupton, 21 May 1871; Correspondence of Mrs. Lupton and Miss Wilson (six letters); quotation from Miss Wilson’s letter of 29 May 1871.

¹⁹ Y.B.E.A.R., 1870, 16; Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1871-80, Meetings of 9 June 1871, 25 July 1871, 12 February 1872.

supported the idea at the Council and spoke strongly in its favour at a meeting held at Miss Wilson's house in Hillary Place in July 1871. A Library Committee was eventually established and a library accommodated in a room rented from the Yorkshire Board of Education in St. Andrew's Chamber, Park Row, Leeds.

Efficient "grammar" schools for girls were also necessary so that girls would be encouraged by the prospect of reasonable results to enter for the Universities local examinations. The third standing committee of the Ladies' Council was therefore set up to examine how existing endowments could be used to expand the educational facilities available to girls. This was a particularly pressing matter as the Endowed Schools Commissioners, in 1871, were already considering Yorkshire endowments. It was hoped that the Ladies' Council would "make it one of their first objects to obtain information respecting the Yorkshire endowments, educational and otherwise". After considering how best these endowments could be adapted for the education of girls, it was intended that specific and practical suggestions would be made to the Commissioners.

The Council took the opportunity presented by the meeting of the Social Science Congress in Leeds in October 1871 to organise a gathering of distinguished people to publicise the work of the Ladies' Council more widely and, in particular, to advertise its interest in the redirection of school endowments to girls' education. The meeting was a triumph for the ladies as Lord Frederick Cavendish agreed to preside and Mr. C. S. Roundell of Merton College, Mrs. Maria Grey and Miss Emily Davies agreed to make speeches.²⁰ The proceedings opened with a speech by Henry Sales describing the origins of the Ladies' Council and its work. Dr. Heaton then praised the work of the Council, and Sir Andrew Fairbairn, Chairman of the Leeds School Board, assured the ladies of the support of that body for their work. In his address Mr. Roundell spoke of his own interest in the establishment of schools for girls and stressed the need for a curriculum which included the domestic subjects. He reviewed the funds available for the financing of girls' schools and promised the help of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge with the secondary education of girls. Miss Mary

²⁰ Although she attended the conference arranged by the Ladies' Council, Miss Davies, in the event, refused to address it and gave her speech on Hitchin College at a separate meeting in the Philosophical Hall. *Leeds Mercury*, 7 October 1871. Miss Davies disliked the notion of separate examinations for women over eighteen and the Cambridge Extension Lectures (organised by the North of England Council and with which the L.L.E.A. and the L.H.C. were involved) as she feared the establishment of a second-class system of higher education for women. J. Roach, *Public Examinations in England, 1850-1900*, (1971), 119-20.

Carpenter and Mr. James Stuart both supported Mr. Roundell's views, Stuart stating that, in his opinion, men and women had equal capacities for study and that he had found in many towns that women were more anxious for learning than men.

It was Mrs. Maria Grey's address which perhaps had the greatest effect on the Ladies' Council. She read a paper proposing a National Union for the Improvement of the Education of Women and Girls of all classes.²¹ The purpose of this Union was to collect and disseminate information about the education of women and girls and to assist with the formation of Councils, similar to the pioneering North of England Council. The Union was intended to encourage the establishment of local committees working independently but represented at a national council in London. Mrs. Grey stressed particularly the need to have well educated and well trained female teachers if the programme were to be fulfilled.

The meeting held on 6 October 1871 had a number of important repercussions. The members of the Ladies' Council were encouraged to examine some Leeds endowments in detail and, in particular, that of the Charity School. A memorandum on the Charity School, published by the Council, stressed that the objects of the charity had changed several times since its foundation and that at the present time the school was simply teaching girls who would otherwise have attended public elementary schools in the town. It was argued that the fund could, with justification, be redirected yet again, this time to provide for Leeds a first-class school for girls and thereby "help the poor of the cultivated classes to a higher education". This memorandum was sent to the Endowed Schools Commissioners in 1872. It was accompanied by a Memorial from the Ladies' Council and the York Association for the Improvement of Female Education, asking for schools for middle-class girls to be provided in Leeds and York. Mr. Richmond, one of the Commissioners, replied to the Memorial and suggested that, from the "Harrison's Charity School" endowment, a scheme might be prepared which should "materially assist" in promoting the higher education of girls in Leeds. Mr. Fearon, an assistant Commissioner, was expected to visit Leeds to confer with the Ladies' Council, but no immediate progress was made. At the 1873 Annual Meeting of the Council in York Canon Robinson of the Commission made further promises to the ladies, pointing out that an endowment used previously for boys had already been used to set up a

²¹ Often called the Women's Educational Union. In 1872, it set up the Girls' Public Day School Company, J. Kamm, *op. cit.*, 215-16.

girls' school at Keighley and that similar arrangements were being made to establish girls' schools in Bingley, Bradford and Wakefield.²²

Another consequence of the meeting of October 1871 was that the Council, at its Annual Meeting in 1872, resolved to apply for membership of Mrs. Grey's National Union. Mrs. Grey was also invited by the Ladies' Council to visit Yorkshire in March 1872 and speak on "The Principles of Education and their Application to the Education of Women" at meetings organised in Halifax, Keighley, York, Wakefield, Bradford and Sheffield. The ladies present at these gatherings resolved "to co-operate with the Ladies' Honorary Council in carrying out the scheme of the National Union" and a Conference was held on 18 April 1872 to discuss the way in which this resolution could be implemented. It was decided to form local committees of the Council in the Yorkshire towns to carry out the work of the Ladies' Council and the National Union.²³

The establishment of these local committees, partly as a result of the meetings held in March 1872 and the affiliation of the Council to Mrs. Grey's National Union, were an indication of the growing independence of the Council of the support of the Yorkshire Board. This growing independence is also evident in the willingness of the Council to reform its own schemes of work, Emily Kitson's reorganisation of the health lectures being one of the earliest examples. The formal link between the Yorkshire Board and the Ladies' Council was not broken until 1875 when the Board's almost exclusive concern with the establishment of the Yorkshire College led the ladies to conclude that the interests of the Council and the Board had so diverged as to become distinct. In May 1875 the ladies resolved "that for the future, the Council will manage its own financial affairs", and from August 1875 onwards, that the Ladies' Honorary Council should be called the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education.²⁴

The fact that the Yorkshire Board did not oppose this resolution suggests that the time was opportune for the two organisations to go their separate ways.

Administrative Structure and Membership

The independence of the Ladies' Council of the Yorkshire Board in 1875 was, to a great extent, made possible by the development of a system of committees which allowed almost any work undertaken to be administered effectively and executed independently of the Board

²² Leeds City Archives. Y.L.C.C., 46; *Yorkshire Gazette*, 1 February 1873.

²³ L.H.C. of Yorkshire Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1871, 6; 1872, 11.

²⁴ Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1871-80, Meetings of May 1875 and August 1875.

itself. At the suggestion of the Yorkshire Board, three standing committees with specific responsibilities had been established initially to carry out the work of the Council. In practice, the terms of reference of these committees were changed as circumstances dictated. New committees were established; in 1874 to organise the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery, in 1879 to consider the employment of gentlewomen and, in 1888, to foster the industrial arts and the Sloyd method of teaching woodwork. The standing committees were responsible for the work of the Ladies' Council throughout Yorkshire and tended to meet at the central office in Leeds. The work of each committee was, as far as possible, self-financed by fees charged at lectures or for training courses. However, it was still necessary to raise some funds by subscription and to accept donations to finance particular projects.

After 1872 the work of the Council outside Leeds was carried out by local committees such as those established at Wakefield, York and Sheffield. These local committees could expect help from the central standing committees, providing the executive committee of the Council had agreed to the work being undertaken. Lecturers, teachers and materials such as books, tracts, diagrams and posters were then made available to the local committees. At first, control by the executive committee of the local committees was direct, simply because all subscriptions received locally were to be remitted to the general Honorary Secretary after deduction had been made for expenditure already agreed. However, by 1889, the executive committee recognised that much of the work organised by local and standing committees had developed a marked degree of independence. For example, the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery and the Sheffield branch of the Council had developed as efficiently-run institutions, arranging successfully their own programmes within the general framework laid down by the Council. Greater financial independence was thus considered appropriate. After 1889, most of the subscription income of local and standing committees was therefore retained by them, lists of subscribers and ten per cent of the income only being submitted to the central office.²⁵

The development of the work of the Council and the growing complexity of its organisation meant that the work of the Honorary Secretary needed to be supplemented by the services of a permanent and paid officer. Accordingly, Miss Robinson was appointed in July 1873 to assist Mrs. Lupton. After Miss Robinson's resignation in

²⁵ *Ibid*; circular and rules pinned at meeting of 20 June 1876; *Minute Book*, 1889-1904, Meeting of January 1890.

November 1875 Miss McCombe, a former teacher at the Ladies' Educational Institute in Leeds and a member of the Mill Hill Congregation, was appointed secretary of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery and of the Ladies' Council. At first, the secretaries used as their office the students' library at St. Andrew's Chambers and it was not until 1875, when the School of Cookery and the Ladies' Council obtained accommodation at 9 Tower Buildings, Albion Street, that the Council had permanent premises. By the late 1880s, the School of Cookery needed more spacious accommodation and, in 1889, it moved to Carlton Court, 90 Albion Street, after fire had damaged the premises at Tower Buildings.

The considerable expansion of the work of the Ladies' Council during the twenty years after 1871 was also made possible by the fact that many of the Council members had already gained relevant and valuable experience as a result of their involvement with the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and, through it, with the North of England Council. Mrs. Frances Elizabeth Lupton is a case in point as she represented the Association at meetings of the North of England Council and, in 1870 and 1871, gave hospitality at her home to visitors from other towns, for example, Miss Clough, Miss Gaskell and Professor Seeley.²⁶ The ladies were also often people of considerable organising ability, wholeheartedly devoted to the work of the Council. Miss Maude of Knowsthorpe Hall, President of the Council from 1872 to 1885 was only one of several ladies who served the Council with distinction during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is not possible to describe the individual achievements of these ladies but attention is drawn to Eleanor Thompson,²⁷ who was joint Honorary Secretary of the Council from 1876 onwards, and to Annie Eddison²⁸ who ultimately succeeded Mrs. Lupton as the other joint Honorary Secretary. Mrs. Fenwick,²⁹ the Honorary Secretary of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery from 1876 to 1880, also managed to find

²⁶ F. E. Lupton, *Book of Events* (MS). This source was made available to me through the courtesy of Miss E. G. Lupton; S. C. Lemoine, *op. cit.*, 233-51.

²⁷ Wife of Mr. V. Thompson, Barrister and Member of the Conversation Club. T. Porter, *op. cit.*, 271; E. Kitson Clark, *Conversation Club*, 26.

²⁸ Anna Paulina Tatham was born in Philadelphia in 1843 and married R. W. Eddison (of John Fowler Ltd.) in 1862. They lived at Headingley Hall. She was a member of the Endowments and Education Committees of the Ladies' Council and Honorary Secretary of the Leeds Committee for Educational Work set up in 1881. She became Honorary Secretary of the Y.L.C. in 1886. Lists of committee members in Y.L.C., *Annual Reports*; MS account of the life of Mrs. Eddison in Leeds City Archives, Y.L.C.C. 124.

²⁹ She was the wife of Thomas Fenwick, civil engineer of Chapel Allerton. T. Porter, *op. cit.*, 182.

time to serve as a member of the Industrial Arts and Sloyd Committee and as Honorary Secretary of the Gentlewomen's Employment Committee.

Each of these ladies was able to call upon the ready advice and constant friendship of Frances Elizabeth Lupton who was unquestionably the key figure in the work of the Council during this period. She was general Honorary Secretary from 1871 to 1885 and Vice-President until 1891. As a result, she was a regular attender at the meetings of the standing and executive committees, was well-placed to offer encouragement to individuals such as Emily Kitson and she seems generally to have been a fount of energy and good sense.

Whatever the achievements of the Ladies' Council owed to the contribution of individual ladies, the most striking fact is that the active members of the Council came from a small number of professional and manufacturing families in Leeds who shared "common intellectual and cultural standards"³⁰ and who were already closely involved in social and educational work in the county. The "heads" of the families of many of the Leeds ladies were members of organisations such as the Philosophical and Literary Society, the Conversation Club, the Leeds Mechanics' Institute, the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes and the Yorkshire Board of Education. As examples, Lucy Wilson's father, Thomas Wilson, was the founder of the Conversation Club and Vice-President of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes. Mrs. Fanny Heaton, President of the first Ladies' Committee of the Yorkshire Board of Education, Secretary of the Endowments Committee and of the Leeds Girls' High School Committee, and Miss Ellen Heaton, Secretary of the Health Committee until 1876, were respectively the wife and sister of Dr. J. D. Heaton. Elizabeth Kitson, an active member of the Endowments and Leeds Girls' High School Committees had become in 1866 or 1867 the second wife of James Kitson, the locomotive engineer and President of the Leeds Mechanics' Institute. Emily Kitson was the wife of James Kitson, Jnr., Honorary Secretary of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes and witness before the Select Committee on Technical Instruction in 1867. Frances Elizabeth Lupton was connected, through her husband, Francis, with local organisations and through her own family with the work of that English middle-class "élite", which was involved in contemporary national educational development. Her aunt was Harriett Martineau,

³⁰ G. Kitson Clark, "The Leeds Elite", *The University of Leeds Review*, 17. 2, (1974) 240 and 256.

her father was Dr. T. M. Greenhow of Newcastle³¹ and she, more than any of the other members of the Council, illustrates the family and intellectual networks which were such a characteristic and influential feature of Victorian society at this time.³²

In Leeds itself, the Council included Mrs. Schunk and Mrs. Joshua Buckton, the niece and sister-in-law respectively of Frances Elizabeth Lupton, as well as the more immediate members of the Lupton family. In the 1880s and 1890s it was Mrs. Lupton's daughters-in-law who were active in the affairs of the Council.

The Luptons were, of course, only one constituent family of the "Leeds élite", that group of people which included the Kitsons, Bails, Bucktons, Passavants, Tootals and Luccocks and which, in G. Kitson Clark's phrase, did "what no one else was likely to do". The families within this group, comfortably off, cultivated and for the most part renting pews in the Unitarian Chapel at Mill Hill, undoubtedly included ladies of considerable ability. It was the alliance of this ability with the strong and extensive family connections which made possible the success of the ventures upon which the ladies had embarked.

The Education of Middle-Class Women and Girls

The Ladies' Council originated partly in the involvement of some Leeds ladies, particularly of Mrs. Heaton, in the national movement to develop university local examinations for girls and to create institutions of secondary and higher education from which middle-class girls and women could benefit. One reason for this national concern was the growing awareness that the standard of education of middle-class girls, taught by governesses at home or in private schools for young ladies, was poor, even in comparison with the standards attained by girls from some "National" schools. It was also increasingly being accepted that middle-class girls were able to benefit from as rigorous an education as their brothers obtained in the endowed grammar schools, many of which were being reformed after 1868. A further, most pressing reason for the improvement of the

³¹ C. A. Lupton, *The Lupton Family in Leeds* (1965). Dr. Greenhow had been closely involved with educational developments in the north east. His concern for public health in Leeds is indicated by his survey of diarrhoeal diseases, conducted for the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, after he had come to live in the city. Second Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, P.P. 1860, XXIX.

³² For an account of such an élite, see Noel Annan, "Intellectual Aristocracy", in J. H. Plumb (ed.), *Studies in Social History* (1955). Intellectual and family networks were particularly important in the politics of science in the early nineteenth century. See, for example, D. E. Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain, a Social History* (1976), Ch. IV.

secondary schools for middle-class girls and for an extension of the opportunities in higher education available to them, was the realisation that a growing number of middle-class women were being obliged to earn their livings, and that their poor education and social pride forced them to take work, often in humiliating circumstances, as poorly-paid governesses, or to exploit their skills as milliners or dressmakers.

Throughout this period the Ladies' Council worked to aid and promote those agencies which were already established and which were concerned to develop the secondary and higher education of middle-class girls and women. Occasionally, the Council initiated new schemes; more often they simply acted in conjunction with other organisations, resorting where necessary to taking over and extending work which other organisations were unable to continue.

In the summer of 1871 the Ladies' Council had taken the initiative in the establishment of the Students' Library, principally to meet the needs of young women who wished to work for the Cambridge Higher Local examinations. The Library Committee expressed itself willing to provide any books recommended by the lecturers of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association for their own or other classes. Subscriptions were invited, and £74 10s. was received within a few months. The Library opened on 15 September 1871, with 119 books (value £30) covering a variety of topics which included biblical study, history, literature, mathematics and the physical, natural and moral sciences. At first it was housed in a room at St. Andrew's Chambers, the headquarters of the Yorkshire Board, and was open on Tuesdays and Fridays between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. There were three classes of subscribers, Class A, ladies paying half a guinea to the Yorkshire Board of Education; Class B, members of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association who paid 4s. a year to that organisation. The Leeds Ladies' Educational Association itself paid £3 for corporate membership of the Library which also allowed it to use the room for meetings. Class C included those ladies living away from Leeds who were required to pay an annual subscription of £3 to borrow books, in addition to the postage costs. The number of members in the first year was 23 and there were from four to six borrowings per week. By February 1874 there were 37 members, 18 of whom were resident in Yorkshire. The numbers of subscribers increased only slowly, and Miss Garlick, the Honorary Librarian, attributed this to the need to distribute information about the Library more widely and to competition from the public libraries which had improved the access to standard works. There was increased use of the Library after 1876

when two monthly periodicals were taken. During the 1880s the number of books increased substantially and the Library became more useful for reference as well as for borrowing. By 1889 the number of subscribers had reached 79. Despite the relatively small membership, the continued existence of the Library was never questioned as it clearly filled a distinct need. It was of particular use to ladies, often governesses, living in places remote from libraries, who wished to borrow books so that they could continue their studies for the examinations now open to them and gain recognised qualifications to command a reasonable salary as teachers. There were enquiries from other parts of the country about the organisation of the Student's Library. In response to one such request, Miss Galloway of Glasgow was provided with the appropriate information and the Library in Leeds was made available to Glasgow students until their own local library was functioning.³³

In its work of promoting the Universities' Local Examinations for women and girls and of providing lecture courses to aid those studying for these examinations, the principal role of the Ladies' Council throughout this period was that of supporting and supplementing the work of other bodies. The controversy of 1871 had established the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association in control of the running and supervision of the Cambridge Local Examinations for women in Leeds. The Oxford Locals, however, continued to be organised by the Ladies' Council until 1879 when Leeds became a centre for the Oxford Higher Local Examinations for women. The organisation of the Oxford Examinations was then given over to the Leeds Council of Education.³⁴ On the dissolution of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association in 1881, the Leeds Council of Education also took over the organisation of the Cambridge Examinations. The Leeds Council of Education was itself dissolved in 1885 when it was suggested that the examinations be once again conducted by the Ladies' Council. However, they remained under the management of an independent Examinations Committee headed by Miss Lucy Stables and it was not until 1892 that the University Examinations for women were all run by the Ladies' Council.³⁵

³³ L.H.C. of Yorkshire Board of Education *Annual Report* 1871, 12; 1873, 6. Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1889, 25.

³⁴ A Leeds Council of Education (Leeds Educational Council) had been proposed by Mr. W. E. Forster at a meeting of the Conversation Club. It was to "consist of representatives of all the educational bodies of the Borough, for the more full and effective advancement of Education". E. Kitson Clark, *Conversation Club*, 14.

³⁵ Y.L.C., *Minute Book* 1881-89, Meeting of 11 November 1885 and *Minute Book* 1889-1904, Meeting of 28 October 1892.

The Ladies' Council had also supported the work of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association in providing lectures by university men to Leeds audiences, often composed largely of women. In this activity Mrs. Eddison, Secretary of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and member of the Ladies' Council, was able to provide much useful contact between the two ladies' associations. In April 1872 the Ladies' Council had also memorialised the Examinations Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, asking that the Syndicate provide tutors and lecturers in the localities and thus help local committees in their attempts to promote the higher education of women. The University Extension movement was established as a result of this and many similar requests. The Cambridge University Extension Committee, on which the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association was represented, continued its work in Leeds until 1877 by which time the Yorkshire College of Science was sufficiently well established to supply the lecturers required locally. Two professorships, one in Classics and the other in Literature and History, were established at the College, partly with funds supplied by the University Extension Committee.³⁶

Lectures given by ladies on topics not dealt with by the Yorkshire College continued to be organised by the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and the Ladies' Council. After 1881 such lectures were organised by Mrs. Eddison who was the Secretary of the Ladies' Council Committee for Education in Leeds. Lectures of general interest were given, such as those of Miss Crane in 1881 on "Art and the Formation of Taste". Others catered for more specialist interests; those of Dr. Pechey were organised in conjunction with the Health Committee and an extensive programme of work was arranged for elementary school teachers who received lectures from Professor Meiklejohn in August 1878 and, in 1893, on the Froebel methods.

The relationship between the Ladies' Council and the Yorkshire College was intimate. Ties of sentiment were particularly strong as the husbands of some of the members had been involved in the formation of the College, for example, Dr. Heaton and Francis Lupton. This sentiment was felt particularly strongly by Lady Frederick Cavendish, President of the Ladies' Council after 1886, and expressed at the Executive Meetings of the Ladies' Council in June and September 1886, held by invitation at the Yorkshire College.³⁷ The Yorkshire College had also from its foundation been open to women as well as men (unlike Owen's College in Manchester) and had afforded such

³⁶ Yorkshire College of Science, *Annual Report*, 1876-7, 14-15.

³⁷ Lord Frederick Cavendish had been killed at Phoenix Park, Dublin in 1882.

"ready facilities for acquiring higher education as were but rarely afforded". After 1886, it was felt that there was no need to do more in local higher education as the Yorkshire College was available to supply all the teaching required. The outstanding need was to encourage women and girls to take advantage of the opportunities at hand. To this end drawing-room meetings were held by Mrs. Heaton, Lady Kitson (the second wife of James Kitson, Jr.) and Mrs. Barran. Many of the ladies at these meetings, at the instigation of Mrs. Heaton, had already been instrumental in privately raising 1,000 guineas as a contribution to the building fund of the Yorkshire College in 1883.³⁸

New schemes relating to higher education were adopted only after consultation with Sir Nathan Bodington, Principal of the Yorkshire College. In June 1889 Mrs. Dundas suggested that a home study scheme be introduced, whereby students wishing to study in their own homes would be able to meet together for mutual help and obtain regular lectures from the University of Cambridge. Mrs. Heaton consulted Principal Bodington who advised the introduction of a similar scheme organised by the Victoria University. This advice was accepted and a home study centre was set up in Chapel Allerton in 1889, and the first courses given by lecturers from the Yorkshire College.³⁹

It had been clear to the Ladies' Council from the beginning that the success of the movement to promote the higher education of women would depend on the establishment of sound day schools for middle-class girls, equivalent in their work to the reformed endowed grammar schools for boys. Despite the efforts of the Ladies' Council in Leeds, and of Mrs. Elizabeth Kitson in particular, nothing had been done to use charitable funds in Leeds for the endowment of a girls' grammar school. In May 1875 it was felt by the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and the Ladies' Council that "the want of a high class education for girls is seriously felt in Leeds".⁴⁰ Hence the two organisations held a special meeting at which Mrs. Kitson presented a plan she had prepared for the setting up of a girls' school. Detailed consideration of the scheme was deferred until an equal joint committee of the two organisations could be formed. On 28 October 1875, at Claremont, Frances Elizabeth Lupton presided over a

³⁸ Letter from Mrs. Heaton to Edward Baines, quoted by E. J. Brown in *The Private Donor in the History of the University* (1953), 13-14.

³⁹ Y.L.C., Association for Home Study, *Minute Book*, Meetings of January 1889 and May 1889.

⁴⁰ Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1871-80. Meeting of May, 1875.

meeting which established a committee of 16 ladies, eight from the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and eight from the Ladies' Council.⁴¹ In November 1875 this committee was augmented by eight men, Dr. Gott (Vicar of Leeds), Dr. Henderson (Headmaster of the Grammar School), Mr. Baines, Mr. W. L. Jackson, Mr. Baily and Mr. Ledgard (both Inspectors of Schools), Mr. James Kitson, Jnr. and (later) Professor Rücker of the Yorkshire College. Dr. Gott was subsequently appointed President of the Committee, with Mrs. F. E. Lupton as Vice-President and Mrs. Heaton and Mrs. Eddison as Secretaries. Weekly committee meetings were held in November and December 1875 and it was decided that by means of a Leeds Girls' High School Company, £10,000 in capital would be raised for the setting up of a girls' school by selling 2000 shares of £5 each. The Company (based on the model of the Girls' Public Day School Company set up by Mrs. Grey) rented St. James Lodge, Woodhouse Lane in March 1876 and on 13 June Miss C. L. Kennedy was appointed Headmistress. The school began its work with 42 pupils in September 1876, and was formally opened two months later by Lord Hatherley. Despite many doubts expressed, not least by Lord Hatherley himself, about the effects of rigorous, academic work on the physical well-being of young ladies, Miss Kennedy, in a well-argued speech, outlined and justified the intellectually-demanding curriculum of the new school. Her attitude was that education was not only the imparting of information but the strengthening and developing of mental powers so that Latin, as well as a modern language, must be taught "for the purpose of developing accurate, logical thought". Other equally valuable subjects were, in Miss Kennedy's view, arithmetic and mathematics and some branch of natural science, particularly chemistry "to promote habits of reflection and observation".⁴² It was a curriculum which compared favourably with that of any contemporary boys' grammar school. The high and rigorous standards set at the beginning of the School's life must have met with the wholehearted approval of the members of the Ladies' Council.

⁴¹ The L.L.E.A. representatives were Miss Carbutt, Mrs. Eddison, Miss E. J. Ford, Mrs. John Gott, Mrs. V. Thompson, Miss Tootal, Mrs. E. Walker and Mrs. Theodosia Marshall. The Y.L.C. representatives were Mrs. Fenwick, Mrs. Heaton, Mrs. Jowitt, Mrs. F. E. Lupton, Mrs. Kitson, Miss Maude, Miss Jane Paley and Mrs. Schunk. Leeds Girls' High School (hereafter L.G.H.S.), *Minute Book*, 1875-82.

⁴² Miss Kennedy was the daughter of the Rev. W. J. Kennedy, an inspector of schools, and she had been an assistant mistress at Cheltenham Ladies College. L.G.H.S., *Minute Book*, Meetings of 6 December 1875; 13 June 1870 and August 1876. See also the printed Handbill describing Miss Kennedy's curriculum.

The hope for endowments for the new school was not, however, fulfilled for some years, although surplus money from charitable endowments in Leeds was available. There was considerable disappointment and even anger among members of the Ladies' Council when in 1877 £700 of the surplus funds of the Poor Estate in Leeds was used by the Charity Commissioners to endow 16 scholarships at the Leeds Grammar School and one Exhibition for boys at a university. The scheme must have been framed with the knowledge of Dr. Gott and Dr. Henderson, both closely involved with the Trustees of the Poor Estate, the Grammar School and with the Girls' High School, yet none of the ladies knew of it until it had been accepted by the Charity Commissioners. The matter was brought to the notice of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association only by a letter from a Miss Robinson of Keighley. The Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and the Ladies' Council met together hastily to try to prevent (by means of a Memorial) the scheme from being accepted by the Privy Council. They subsequently attempted to exact a promise from the Trustees of the Poor Estate that any future monetary surplus should be used for the education of girls. However, so much ill-feeling had been caused by this matter that the attempt to exact a firm promise had to be abandoned as dissension among the joint committee of Ladies came close to threatening the existence of any association for promoting the education of women in Leeds. In 1886, £500 was allotted from the "Poor's Estate" to the Girls' High School by the Charity Commissioners, and in 1898, by means of a new scheme, the Charity Commission granted a capital sum of £12,000 to the Girls' School from the Grammar School Foundation. As a result of this scheme, the Leeds Girls' High School Company was purchased and the government of the School reformed according to the requirements of the scheme.⁴³

Like Mrs. Maria Grey, the Ladies' Council realised that the success of the new Girls' High Schools and the acceptance of women in higher education depended on a supply of well-trained and well-qualified women teachers. Indeed the security of those middle-class women who had taken the higher examinations or even degrees and had become properly qualified as teachers, depended on the proper recognition and registration of those so qualified and on the maintenance of high standards. The Ladies' Council gave moral support to Mrs. Grey's national campaign for the proper training and registration of women teachers. This support had been inspired by a meeting addressed by

⁴³ Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1871-80, Meeting of May 1877; *ibid* 1881-9, Meeting of December 1886. H. M. Jewell, *A School of Unusual Excellence*, (1976), 2-3.

Mrs. Grey on 22 February 1877, at which the Ladies' Council, Leeds Ladies' Educational Association, the Leeds Girls' High School Company and the Leeds school-mistresses were represented. Despite undoubted sympathy with this group's work, there is no evidence that actual financial support was given to the Society for the Registration of Teachers, particularly after the Womens' Educational Union was disbanded in 1882. Nor was active support given to the Teachers' Guild despite requests in 1887 and 1889 for the Ladies' Council to support the establishment of branches in Leeds.⁴⁴ The Ladies' Council seem to have felt that this was a matter with which it could not be concerned.

The work of the Ladies' Council, and of other agencies in Leeds, in developing institutions which provided increased educational opportunities for middle-class women and girls resulted eventually in a greater availability of better educated and qualified young women to take up posts as teachers and governesses. This must be counted one of the major successes of the campaign mounted by the Ladies' Council. However, the situation of the older governesses who had taken up the profession of teaching from "necessity rather than choice" was made very difficult, since many of these ladies had "no special training or previous fitness for the work"⁴⁵ and as more qualified women became available they found it increasingly difficult to get employment. The bargaining position of such women had been poor even earlier in the century when a reasonable salary for a residential post as a governess, with arduous household as well as teaching duties, might be £20 per annum.⁴⁶ It was considerably worse by the 1870s when many were prepared to take a post for no salary at all.

In 1876 the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association had established a Governesses' Registry and Loan Training Fund, with Miss Carbutt as Honorary Secretary, to enable governesses to obtain information about possible situations being offered and to provide them with the means to improve or gain qualifications. By 1878, Miss Carbutt was unable to continue with this work and the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association, lacking the money and resources to maintain an office, asked the Ladies' Council to take over the Register and Fund. The Ladies' Council responded by establishing the Department for Promoting the Employment of Gentlewomen, with Mrs. Fenwick as Honorary Secretary, and an office was rented in October 1879 in

⁴⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, 23 February 1877. Y.L.C. *Minute Book* 1881-9, Meetings of July 1882, March and December 1887 and of July 1889.

⁴⁵ Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1879, 22, Mrs. Fenwick's report.

⁴⁶ J. Kamm, *op. cit.*, 170.

Upper Albion Street. The office remained open all day, with a former governess acting as Secretary in the mornings and lady volunteers in the afternoons. During the first year, although 134 names were on the Register, only 24 engagements were made as governesses, but other employment was also secured as companions and ladies' helps.⁴⁷

The Ladies' Educational Associations in other northern towns joined with Leeds in establishing the Northern United Registry for Governesses in order to widen the possible field of employment. Throughout the period, the number of possible engagements was always very much less than the number of ladies registered and every effort was made to encourage the ladies who came to the Yorkshire branch of the Northern United Registry to obtain proper qualifications as teachers, either through the training courses in cookery and domestic economy run by the Ladies' Council in the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery, or by taking the Universities' Higher Examinations for women. For those for whom further education was impossible training schemes of other kinds were introduced. Evening lessons in dressmaking were begun in 1879 and a training school established in 1885. Classes to teach arithmetic and Latin were established at a cost of 5s. per course. For some years it was even hoped that well-organised schemes of emigration, through the Womens' Emigration Society, might provide new opportunities for young ladies. In 1885 a scheme for piece-mending was begun, ladies being trained to mend faults in pieces of worsted cloth before the cloth was finished. However, the project was abandoned in 1887, as it was found that despite the great amount of skill involved, the rates of pay were very low. Other schemes of training in plan-tracing and typewriting and shorthand were also begun and were fairly successful in training small numbers of ladies. Training classes in handicrafts were provided, for example in brass-working and leatherwork, similar to those offered by the Sheffield Gentlewomens' Employment Committee. These and other crafts such as woodcarving and Sloyd (a Swedish woodworking system) were taught in the technical classroom established in Leeds by the Industrial Arts and Sloyd Committee. A considerable amount of training in craftwork of all kinds was being provided by the Ladies' Council towards the end of the period in Leeds, Sheffield and Mirfield. It was hoped that, if necessary, ladies would be able to sell their craftwork to supplement their incomes. The well-to-do would find recreation from crafts and were encouraged to

⁴⁷ L.L.E.A., *Annual Report*, 1880, resumé of work, 16-17; Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1879, 21, and Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1880, 20.

give lessons to working men and boys to provide them with a worthwhile leisure occupation.

By 1890 much of the earlier work of the Ladies' Council in promoting the education of middle-class girls and women had been taken over by newly-established institutions. Other work had, however, developed, particularly in the teaching of craft subjects, so that, by the time the Technical Instruction Act was implemented in 1891, the Ladies' Council had already established craft and technical workshops in various parts of Yorkshire. It thus had experience of the problems both of supplying teachers and of organising classes for this kind of work.

Health Education

The concern of the Ladies' Council with the education of working-class women and girls had expressed itself from the beginning in the desire to improve their elementary education and in the desire to spread information on health and hygiene. After 1872 the ladies seem to have considered that the teaching of elementary subjects to working-class women was being particularly well catered for at night schools run by the Mechanics' Institute of Leeds, and, for girls below the age of 12, by the new Board Schools. However, the concern to provide teaching on health matters continued to be strongly felt.

The members of the Ladies' Council belonged to that group of prosperous and well-educated Leeds citizens who, since the 1830s, had been concerned with the poor sanitary state of the town. In part this concern had been expressed through the spate of reports by local doctors (beginning with those of Baker in the 1830s and 1840s), which attempted to indicate the causes of cholera epidemics, of the frequent cases of typhoid, typhus and of the high rate of child mortality. Further reports in the 1850s and 1860s and those of Dr. Greenhow in 1859 and of Dr. Braithwaite in 1863⁴⁸ eventually stimulated governmental investigation. The reports of Dr. Hunter⁴⁹ in 1864 for the Privy Council and of Dr. J. N. Radcliffe⁵⁰ in 1871 for the Local Government Board reflected much local opinion and put the condition of Leeds into the national context. They stressed particularly that the number of deaths per thousand of the population in Leeds

⁴⁸ J. Braithwaite, *An Inquiry into the High Death Rate in Leeds* (1863).

⁴⁹ H. J. Hunter, On Circumstances Endangering the Public Health in Leeds, in Eighth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, P.P. 1866, XXXIII.

⁵⁰ J. N. Radcliffe, The Sanitary State of Leeds with Particular Reference to Diarrhoea and Fever, *Report to the Local Government Board*, 1871. Radcliffe was an eminent epidemiologist who had trained at Leeds Medical School and worked in Leeds. G. Kitson Clark, "The Leeds Elite", 251.

(summarised by the Registrar General) was higher than the national average, and Leeds was bracketed with Manchester, Liverpool and Salford in having the worst mortality figures. Hunter pointed out that despite a somewhat improved water supply, obtained from the Wharfe, and the building of sewers to some streets, Leeds in 1865 still presented an appearance "bringing to remembrance the condition of many English towns 20 years ago". Poor conditions and a high mortality rate were attributed by Hunter to the unwillingness of the Corporation to provide adequate sewerage facilities, particularly in the centre of the town where the majority of the working population was housed in ill-ventilated courts and cellars.

It was clear that knowledge of even the most elementary facts of hygiene was lacking amongst those living in the areas of the highest mortality and it was hoped, by many well-meaning people, that if the women of these areas were given simple instruction in physiology and hygiene, then some ill-health and suffering might be reduced, even avoided. Dr. Heaton expressed the concern of many of the richer citizens of Leeds that there seemed little point in demolishing poor working-class cottages and providing superior three-bedroom houses (as he himself had done) if, because of ignorance, bedrooms were let to lodgers, dirt allowed to accumulate and windows closed up to prevent draughts, so that "debility, fevers and other ailments, misery and immorality would still prevail".⁵¹ In her report for 1871 Miss Ellen Heaton, Honorary Secretary of the Health Committee of the Ladies' Council until 1876, expressed in rather extravagant terms a widely felt philanthropic motive for spreading information on health matters.

"In place of those thousands of little children whose crowded graves now fill our churchyards or who struggle through a childhood made joyless by sick feebleness to a warped and repining maturity, we hope in years to come to show a noble array of mighty Englishmen, a myriad of healthy, hopeful English wives and mothers."⁵²

It was Mrs. Catherine Buckton who expressed the view of some of the more far-sighted ladies that only if working people were sufficiently well informed of the harm done to their health by the poor conditions of the town would sufficient pressure be put on the Corporation to force improvements to be made.⁵³

⁵¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 13 November 1872; speech of Dr. Heaton at the Conference on the previous day.

⁵² L.H.C. of Yorkshire Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1871, 11. There is much information about Miss Ellen Heaton in "Extracts from the Journals of John Deakin Heaton", ed. by Brian and Dorothy Payne, *Thoresby Society Publications* LIII, *Miscellany* 15, 1972, 140-53.

⁵³ *Leeds Mercury*, 13 November 1872; Mrs. Buckton's speech at the Conference on the previous day.

The work of the Council began in the spring of 1871 with Dr. Braithwaite's lectures, organised by the Yorkshire Board of Education and given in some houses of the "British Workman"⁵⁴ in Leeds. A paid lecturer, Mr. Mason, also lectured in Leeds and in Slaidburn, the latter sponsored by Mrs. Birchall for her tenants. However, Emily Kitson, who attended some of these lectures, realised that the audience did not understand them. "I saw poor women with puny, sickly babies listening eagerly, but with looks of evident vacancy and bewilderment".⁵⁵ Encouraged by Mrs. Lupton, she drew up a scheme for simpler and more practical teaching. She suggested that basic teaching of sanitary matters should be given to small groups of women in six (or more) weekly classes (not lectures) by members of the Ladies' Council who, it was to be expected, would have a better appreciation of the life and difficulties of other wives and mothers than men lecturers could have. The talks should also be illustrated by diagrams and simple demonstrations and should be followed up by the distribution of information in the form of tracts which would be given away, sold or lent. This scheme was adopted for the work during the winter of 1871-2 and subsequently formed the basis of the programme which the Ladies' Council used in its courses of classes for working women during the remainder of the period.

In the absence of other volunteers, Emily Kitson reluctantly began the first classes herself in the autumn of 1871 in the Zion School, New Wortley. The classes were introduced by means of a lecture by Mr. Edward Atkinson who in simple language spoke on "How to reduce our Death Rate" or "Hints to Householders", and Emily Kitson followed this with six lessons to a small group of 26 unmarried women. In the following week Mrs. Catherine Buckton began some classes at Holbeck Mechanics' Institute. In January 1872, Emily Kitson's lessons at the Zion School continued and new classes were begun by Mrs. Mary Anne Baily⁵⁶ at Woodhouse Mechanics' Institute, following an introductory lecture by Dr. Albutt on "Health and Disease". The wives of some vicars, for example, Mrs. Dent of St.

⁵⁴ T. Porter, *op. cit.*, xxiii. "British Workman" is described as a public house and numbers 1 to 16 are listed in Leeds. These were perhaps clubs for working men and some seem to have had libraries.

⁵⁵ E. C. Kitson, *Sanitary Lessons to Working Women in Leeds* (Ladies' Council of the Yorkshire Board of Education, Leeds 1873), 3 and 4.

⁵⁶ Mary Anne Baily was the wife of Walter Baily of Hyde Terrace, Leeds, Inspector of Schools (T. Porter, *op. cit.*). He was also a member of the Conversation Club. (E. Kitson Clark, *Conversation Club*, 27). Mr. and Mrs. Baily were members of the congregation of Mill Hill Chapel in the 1860s and early 1870s. (See the *Pew Rent Books* and *Register of Marriages and Baptisms*).

Jude's and Mrs. Jones of Hunslet Moor, followed the example by giving talks in their own parishes.

The Ladies' Council hoped to be able to extend this work in the winter of 1872-3 and, in order to publicise the work of the previous winter and to encourage other volunteers, a Conference was held in the Civil Court of Leeds Town Hall on 12 November 1872. A large gathering of people heard Dr. Heaton, the Chairman, stress the need to teach health matters to working women, and Mrs. Buckton described her work of the previous winter. Perhaps as a result of this Conference, Mrs. Fenwick gave a very short course of talks at Chapel Allerton, but no further volunteers came forward and Mrs. Buckton's classes before Christmas were supplemented by classes given by Mr. London in Wakefield, York and Scarcroft: Mrs. Bailey gave more classes during the winter. Emily Kitson resumed her work in Holbeck in January 1873,⁵⁷ giving a series of eight lessons to two groups, one of married women on Monday afternoons in the Board School Committee Room at Mann's Field, Holbeck, the other to unmarried girls on Monday evenings in the Zion School, New Wortley.

All these ladies wrote accounts of their work to encourage other volunteers to conduct similar classes. The accounts written by Emily Kitson and Catherine Buckton and printed by the Ladies' Council⁵⁸ are particularly detailed. They include the syllabuses followed and describe the teaching methods employed. In addition they shed light on the character and intentions of the two ladies. Emily Kitson's objective was to gain the interest and confidence of a small group of women, who, she hoped, would attend the classes regularly, so that informed and fruitful discussion might take place; Mrs. Buckton's talks were given to a larger number. She had an audience of about 80 at her first series of five talks, 60 at the second and an audience of 200 made up of "mothers' meetings" of several denominations at the third. Both ladies used models, diagrams and simple experiments to illustrate their talks. Mrs. Buckton, in particular, used a great many experiments and demonstrations, often conducted by her son, to illustrate her arguments. Further information in the form of sanitary tracts was distributed at the end of lessons given by both ladies and each distributed sheets of questions to be answered before the following

⁵⁷ This work continued in spite of increasing family responsibilities. Mrs. Baily gave birth to a daughter, Emma, in November 1872, and Emily Kitson's daughter, Alice Hilda, was born in September of the same year. Mill Hill Chapel, *Register of Marriages and Baptisms*.

⁵⁸ E. C. Kitson, *Sanitary Lessons*, C. M. Buckton, *Two Winters' Experience in Giving Lectures to my Fellow Townswomen of the Working Classes on Physiology and Hygiene* (1873).

lesson. Mrs. Buckton awarded prizes, donated by the Ladies' Council, for the best answers, but Emily Kitson felt that the desire to learn should arise from the realisation of the importance of the information itself rather than from a spirit of competition and rivalry.

Classes of the kind conducted by these ladies were not continued systematically after 1873. Emily Kitson died in October 1873 after the birth of her son, Edward, and Catherine Buckton, elected a member of the Leeds School Board in 1873, turned her attention to the teaching of physiology and hygiene to girls in the Board Schools. In the winter of 1874-5 she taught the girls elementary science and physiology and gave information about food and the substances of which foods were composed.⁵⁹ Occasional classes for working women continued to be organised by lady volunteers throughout the period. Mrs. Theed, the wife of the vicar of St. Michael's, Buslingthorpe, gave lessons mainly in her own parish. A Miss Martin gave lessons to mothers in the houses of the Industrial Dwelling Society, Leeds. Miss Bakewell was heavily committed to work of this kind, often supplementing lectures given by Mr. London in Leeds as well as herself teaching young Sunday School scholars.

The work undertaken by the lady volunteers, particularly that conducted during the winters of 1871, 1872 and 1873, had several important results. It reinforced the conviction that the difficulties from which working women suffered were due not only to ignorance, but to the conditions in which they lived. It also emphasised the fact that no systematic teaching of working women by volunteers was possible since not enough middle-class ladies were willing to undertake the task. The acquisition of some knowledge of physiology and hygiene by the working class would be possible only if the appropriate

⁵⁹ These classes were very successful, even though the girls attended voluntarily after school hours. In 1875-6, more lessons on the same basis were given by Mrs. Buckton to two hundred older pupils and pupil teachers. In 1876 Mrs. Buckton was probably responsible for arranging the cookery lessons given by the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery to some of the pupils attending Board Schools. Her books *Food and Home Cookery* and *Health in the House* (enlarged and published as *Our Dwellings, Healthy and Unhealthy* in 1885) were written to guide teachers. It may be due to Mrs. Buckton's influence that the Leeds School Board appointed in 1879 a special teacher to give lessons on the "Laws of Health". She also encouraged the pupils from the Board Schools to take an interest in gardening and in 1877 she gave a course of lectures on plants (published 1879 as *Town and Window Gardening*) which culminated, in the summer of 1878, in an exhibition of window boxes and potted plants arranged and cared for by the pupils. In the 1880s, she seems to have left Leeds as her address is recorded in the subscription list of the Y.L.C. as Ladbroke Square, London. Leeds School Board, *3rd Report, being a review of the Proceedings*, November 1876 to November 1879, esp. pp. 16 and 24.

subjects were taught to children in schools and by teachers properly trained in the work. The experience of Emily Kitson and Catherine Buckton in Holbeck also confirmed the fact that systematic instruction was vitally needed, particularly to prevent the maltreatment of infants. Each of these ladies was able to give examples of widespread practices in the rearing of infants such as the pressing together of the bones of the skull and the "hardening" of small children by exposure to the cold, which caused much suffering, and, on some occasions, death. Of equal importance was the ignorance of the value of particular foods in the diet of children and of adults and of the most economical and nutritious methods of cooking.⁶⁰

The Health Committee of the Ladies' Council had already appreciated the need to train teachers of physiology if its work were not to be curtailed. In 1872, after a Minute of the Science and Art Department allowed that physiology be a subject of examination for female candidates, the Ladies' Council asked Henry Sales, Secretary of the Yorkshire Board of Education, to draw up a detailed scheme for the organisation of a class in animal physiology. This scheme would allow those candidates passing a first course of 30 lessons at the elementary stage and a second course at the advanced stage, to be recognised by the Government as certificated teachers of the subject. Sales expected the course to be of particular benefit to headmistresses and pupil teachers and for a fee of 10s. they could attend both courses. (The fee was higher for those above the social grade of professional teacher.)⁶¹ Mrs. Lupton wrote to the Leeds School Board asking for its co-operation in making the scheme known to teachers and, after a favourable reply was received from Sir Andrew Fairbairn, a draft scheme was sent to the Board. The first course at Carlton Hill Board School was begun in the winter of 1873-4 and in accordance with Mr. Sales's suggestion, was conducted by doctors—Mr. Nunnelly, Mr. Wright and Dr. Eddison. Of the 32 candidates sitting the examination in 1874, eight failed and one candidate passed at the advanced stage.⁶² Classes recommenced in the winter of 1874-5 taught by Mr. McGill and Mr. Walker of the Leeds Infirmary. The results in 1875 were, however, disappointing as only five of the 13 candidates entered were

⁶⁰ E. C. Kitson, *Sanitary Lessons*, 13 and 17; C. M. Buckton, *Lectures . . . on Physiology and Hygiene*, 3.

⁶¹ H. H. Sales, Proposed Scheme for the Organisation of a Class in Animal Physiology, (MS), Leeds City Archives, Y.L.C.C., 51-2.

⁶² An honorarium of £10 each was paid in 1874. Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1871-80, Meeting of August, 1874; L.H.C. of Yorkshire Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1874, 10 and 15.

successful. Of these five, three were in the advanced class and were themselves members of the Ladies' Council—Miss Bakewell, Miss Passavant and Miss McCombe. The training class in physiology was joined in 1875-6 by the members of the first teacher-training class of the new Yorkshire School of Cookery and until the end of the period this group seemed to comprise the main part (if not the whole) of the class.

It had been hoped after the disappointing examination results of 1875 that the doctors of the Infirmary would be no longer needed and that the training class could in future be taught by someone "more knowledgeable in the needs of technical instruction".⁶³ However, the teaching continued to be done by anyone who would undertake the work, although it was still hoped to establish the class on a permanent basis. For the most part the classes were considered successful as in the case of Mrs. Buckton's group of 1875-6 and that of Dr. Edith Pechey in 1877 and 1878. In 1884, a new Chair in physiology was established at the Yorkshire College which the Ladies' Council had helped to endow, and it was hoped that Professor Birch would in future be able to supply teaching conducted in "a scientific manner" to the training class in physiology. However, Professor Birch's classes proved to be expensive and "rather beyond the pupils" and it was resolved that Miss Florance Stephenson be appointed to conduct the class in future. It was not until December 1887 that the Health Committee and the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery were able to make some permanent arrangements for the teaching of the training class, Miss Stephenson was appointed on a permanent basis, and it was decided to form a Science School in connection with the Science and Art Department. In 1888, £4 17s. 11d. was earned by the "School" and, after a visit in 1889 by Mr. Buckmaster, Inspector of the Science and Art Department, a skeleton and microscope were bought on his recommendation. The position of the school seemed secure when in 1889 a Mr. Thompson was appointed to teach "Public Health". In 1891 the grant earned was £30.⁶⁴

The Ladies' Council was able to employ the teachers being produced from the training class to undertake the work of teaching physiology and hygiene to working people. These classes had continued after 1873, but because of the difficulty in obtaining lady

⁶³ Y.L.C. *Annual Report*, 1875, 19; Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1871-80, Meeting of November 2, 1877.

⁶⁴ Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1881-9, Meetings of March and December 1885 and of December 1887; Yorkshire Training School of Cookery (hereafter Y.T.S.C.) *Minute Book*, Meeting of October 1887; Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1888, 1889 and 1891.

volunteers they were taught by Mr. Thomas London⁶⁵ and often given to mixed audiences. Mr. London had begun his work for the Ladies' Council during the winter of 1872-3 when he gave five lectures on hygiene, with special reference to food, to audiences at Wakefield, York and Scarcroft. After 1878, Mrs. Spencer, who had qualified as a teacher of physiology as a result of the Ladies' Council training class, was also employed, and was able to give talks to audiences of women. In 1879, she was also employed by the Leeds School Board⁶⁶ and when, in 1881, the School Board forbade Mrs. Spencer and Mr. London to work for any outside agency, the work of the Ladies' Council seemed threatened. By 1882, when this ban was lifted, the Ladies' Council was sufficiently confident of its supply of qualified women teachers to rule that, in future, women only would be employed by the Council except when working with mixed audiences.⁶⁷

The Ladies' Council itself organised and paid for classes to working-class audiences only in particularly needy areas, for example, in the Leylands in 1876. In August 1879 the vicar of St. Philip's asked for free lectures to be given in his parish as a matter of some urgency.⁶⁸ Such requests were usually granted and were paid for out of a special fund of the Ladies' Council to which employers of labour were often canvassed to subscribe. More frequently, the Ladies' Council provided teachers, hired the diagrams, and provided tracts in any place and for any agency which requested them. Such "lectures" were organised and sponsored by private individuals, typically local landowners for their tenants, manufacturers for their workpeople or by the local standing committees of the Ladies' Council. For example, some members of the Ladies' Council privately sponsored some lectures given by Mrs. Spencer in Leeds and Miss Armstrong in Barran's Clothing Factory in 1878 and 1879. Four lectures by Mr. London given at North Hall Street Mission Room in 1877 were sponsored by Mr. James Dodgshun. Much of the teaching of physiology and hygiene was funded and organised in this way and Mr.

⁶⁵ Thomas London was a teacher who, by 1878, was earning his living as a lecturer employed mainly by the Y.L.C. and partly by the Leeds School Board. T. Porter, *op. cit.*; Leeds City Archives, Handbill, *Syllabus of lectures by Mr. Thomas London*, 1878-9, Y.L.C.C., 53.

⁶⁶ In *Our Dwellings*, Mrs. Buckton indicated (viii-ix) that a lady lecturer was appointed to give "my course of lessons on the Laws of Health in our girls' schools". Apparatus was moved from school to school by handcart. Leeds School Board, *Third Report* . . ., 17.

⁶⁷ Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1881-9, Meetings of September 1881 and July 1882.

⁶⁸ Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1871-80, Meetings of November 1876 and August 1879.

London and Mrs. Spencer were clearly kept busy. In 1879 Mr. London gave 58 lectures mainly in Leeds and its townships but also in Sowerby Bridge and Bingley. In the same year Mrs. Spencer gave 47 lessons.

The Ladies' Council was also anxious to support any teaching which would be of benefit in educating middle-class ladies in physiology, hygiene and nursing, since this might encourage them to do voluntary work. Hence, the classes on nursing given by Miss Florence Lees, Superintendent General of the National and Metropolitan District Nursing Association, were encouraged and 115 ladies attended them. Similarly, 100 ladies made up a women's class of the St. John's Ambulance Association and attended talks and practical classes in the Board Room of Leeds Infirmary.⁶⁹

In 1881, there was considerable interest among the Council members in yet another branch of work. Lectures by Mrs. Johnstone of the National Health Society and a report by Mrs. Fenwick, who had attended the Domestic Economy Congress in 1881, stimulated interest in the setting up of a branch of the Sanitary Aid Society in Leeds. In the end this work was not undertaken in Leeds as it involved not only the dissemination of information about the spread of infectious diseases, but also aid to working people in the form of home nursing and visiting. The Ladies' Council believed that such an Association was not appropriate to a voluntary association of ladies but that it needed to be formed in conjunction with the Corporation.⁷⁰

The work of the Ladies' Council in teaching the "Laws of Health" to working people became less important in the last years of the century, probably because increasing educational provision and a widening curriculum in the elementary schools made it unnecessary. In bringing about this state of affairs, the members of the Ladies' Council had themselves played a major part. In training teachers who were qualified in physiology (and many of them in domestic economy as well), they had made much of their own teaching of adults unnecessary. In the twentieth century, much work of a "social" nature was done by the Ladies' Council in the training of midwives and the founding of the Babies Welcome Society.

The Yorkshire Training School of Cookery

On 26 May 1873 a special meeting of the Ladies' Council was held to consider the desirability of introducing into the work of the Council a programme of lectures on cookery for working women. This move

⁶⁹ Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1879, 16-17; 1877, 18-19; 1878, 2.

⁷⁰ Y.L.C., *Minute Book*, 1881-9, Meeting of December 1881; Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1884, 24.

reflected the experience of those ladies organising and teaching the classes on hygiene and 'health' during the previous winters and may have been prompted by the fact that classes in cookery for working girls were being planned in Wakefield for the coming winter. Considerable encouragement to such a scheme was also afforded by the cookery lessons (given to middle-class ladies) by Mr. Buckmaster at the Third International Exhibition at South Kensington. Mrs. Lupton had attended the Exhibition and described the cookery lessons to members attending the Council meeting.

It was hoped that help would be available from the Science and Art Department of South Kensington in the establishment of cookery classes in Leeds and Yorkshire. Mrs. Lupton wrote directly to Sir Henry Cole asking for the help of Mr. Buckmaster in organising cookery classes in Leeds. She later sent a second letter directly to the Science and Art Department. On 8 August she received the reply that this application did "not come within the rules of the Department".⁷¹ Despite this discouragement, it was clear that feeling in favour of the establishment of a cookery school was strong. Indeed, at the meeting on 18 August many ladies expressed the view that this project was more important than that of higher education for women. A sub-committee had already been formed and Mrs. Salt and Emily Kitson had both put forward detailed schemes for the establishment of a School of Cookery. A meeting was held in the Philosophical Hall, Leeds, on 12 December when a working arrangement was agreed for a new school. A provisional central committee was established consisting of Miss Maude, Mrs. Lupton, Miss Garlick, Mrs. Fenwick, Miss Heaton, Mrs. Kitson (Elizabeth Kitson), Mrs. V. Thompson and Mrs. Eddison and arrangements were made for local committees to be established in any town in Yorkshire. Cookery teaching would be provided in one of these towns when the local committee was able to raise enough money in subscriptions in proportion to the size and population of the town. Subscriptions came in quickly, particularly in Leeds, and it was decided to begin the work of the School of Cookery as soon as possible, holding in reserve the county subscriptions until enough money was available for the classes to be extended beyond the boundary of the city.

Classes began in Leeds on 10 February 1874 in temporary accommodation provided in the Old Bankruptcy Court, Cookridge Street, with Mr. S. Jefferson, F.C.S. giving a lecture and Mrs. Senior of Wakefield and Mrs. Parker preparing and cooking the food being described by the lecturer. This was the method which had been

⁷¹ H. Sillitoe, *A History of the Teaching of Domestic Subjects* (1933), 24-5.

followed at South Kensington and at Wakefield in November 1873, when a lady volunteer had given the lecture. The lessons had been advertised in the *Leeds Mercury* on 10 February and the response was overwhelming. Four hundred and ninety people arrived at 3.30 p.m. for the class intended for ladies and their cooks, for which a charge of 6d. was made. Only 390 people were actually admitted. Even so the room was overcrowded, many ladies had to stand, and a great proportion of the audience was unable to see the demonstration. The evening lesson at 8 p.m., to which "women of the industrial class" were admitted for 1d. was also crowded, although the main criticism made by the audience was of the difficulty in understanding the scientific terms used by the lecturer.⁷² These classes went on throughout the spring and were evidently considered a success, so much so that, when in April a fire in the Old Bankruptcy Court destroyed all the School's equipment to the value of £100, preparations still went on to conduct more classes in Leeds. A central committee was formed consisting of ladies from several different districts in Yorkshire and classes were planned in the "county" during the coming autumn and winter. New temporary accommodation was found in the Leeds Athletics Club and subscriptions were raised, largely by Miss Maude, to make good the losses suffered as a result of the fire. Further help was given during the winter of 1874-5 as the courses in simple and "middle-class" cookery were given by Mr. Xavier Meyer, manager of the Great Northern Hotel, Wellington Street, who did not charge a fee.⁷³

The School of Cookery was not considered to be truly established until permanent accommodation was obtained in March 1875 in some rooms in Tower Buildings, Upper Albion Street. It was then possible to organise more cookery courses, which were run largely by Mrs. Senior. Some idea of the demand for tuition is obtained by the fact that 120 pupils were involved in the practical lessons and 1,500 in the demonstration lessons during the three summer months. Baroness Burdett Coutts, who was visiting Leeds for another meeting, was asked to open the School formally on 22 July 1875. The School of Cookery at Leeds was established as the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery, Leeds branch, since Schools of Cookery had already been established by the local standing committees at Wakefield and York. The York school, however, closed in 1877, and from that time the Leeds and Wakefield centres formed the Yorkshire Training School of

⁷² *Leeds Mercury*, 10 and 11 February 1874.

⁷³ T. Porter, *op. cit.*, 227.

Cookery. In 1884 the name was changed to the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery and Domestic Economy.⁷⁴

The kind of work to be undertaken by the Cookery School, the syllabus to be followed, and the methods to be adopted, had been under careful consideration by the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery and the Ladies' Council since 1873. Mrs. Salt⁷⁵ and Emily Kitson had each drawn up a detailed syllabus which they felt was of particular use in the teaching of the wives of working men. Both stressed that the importance of certain foodstuffs in the diet should be indicated and that the most economical and nutritious ways to prepare these foodstuffs should be emphasised. Emily Kitson had also surveyed the kinds of work the School might undertake and indicated which were likely to be most successful. She considered the kinds of people who would benefit from cookery classes but stressed that teaching methods which were appropriate to one group might not be suitable for another. She suggested that the lecture and demonstration method used at South Kensington was likely to be a successful and remunerative way of teaching ladies of the upper or middle class, but that practical experience in cookery was necessary in the teaching of cooks, the wives of working men and "young girls of the working population". To Emily Kitson, it was the training of girls in elementary schools which was the most valuable work of all and it was she who suggested that a training school should be set up in the neighbourhood of many Board schools which the girls could attend, perhaps as often as twice a week.⁷⁶

As Emily Kitson had anticipated, the most profitable aspect of the work of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery, was the lessons in "middle" and "high-class" or "superior" cookery which had been among the first kinds of classes organised in 1874. They were well established by July 1875 and continued to be held in Leeds and Wakefield throughout the period. Indeed, the importance of this work for the finances of the School is indicated by the concern expressed in 1879 over the declining numbers in the "upper-class" cookery courses, a decline attributed to generally poor trade conditions. These classes, intended for ladies of the prosperous middle classes and their cooks were, at first, given in the form of a lecture, by Mr. Jefferson or Mr.

⁷⁴ Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1874-7, 61-2 and 242-3 and *Minute Book*, 1877-93, Meeting of March 1884.

⁷⁵ Mrs. Titus Salt of Milner Field, Bingley, address in Y.L.C., *Annual Reports*. Mrs. Salt's Cookery Scheme (MS) is in Leeds City Archives, Y.L.C.C. 34.

⁷⁶ E. C. Kitson, *A Few Suggestions on the Establishment of Schools of Practical Cookery* (1873), 3-10. This was made available to me through the courtesy of Mr. G. Talbot Griffith.

Meyer, or, occasionally, by lady volunteers, with cooks demonstrating the recipes. However, Mrs. Fenwick reported to the Annual Meeting of 1875 that at South Kensington the cooks had demonstrated and explained the recipes in a simple conversational way as they worked. It is likely, and particularly after 1877 when properly trained teachers were being employed in Leeds, that this new method of demonstration in "ladies" classes was also used. For a fee of two guineas, entry to a course in "middle-class", "high-class" or "superior" cookery could be obtained. The course consisted of two parts: two-hour demonstration lessons held in the mornings (lessons were also attended by the public by paying an entrance fee) and practical classes held in the afternoons. The classes for ladies were so successful throughout the period that the Yorkshire Training School continued to improve the skill of its teachers in all kinds of cookery likely to be of interest to middle-class audiences. For example, in 1885, Miss Peacock attended classes in "high-class" cookery at the Marshall School of Cookery, Mortimer Street, Leeds.⁷⁷

However, the Ladies' Council was particularly eager to extend its cookery classes to working women. It was hoped that this teaching would not only show these women how to prepare cheap and nutritious meals but would also be accompanied by information on the management and improvement of the comfort of the home. This work was seen as having an important social and moral result as it was expected that good hot meals and comfortable homes would induce working men to spend their evenings with their families rather than in wasting their time and money in public houses. Evening classes for working women were being provided at the Leeds branch of the School of Cookery in the spring of 1874 and in the winter of 1874-5, with the intention of extending this work to outlying villages of Leeds and of the West Riding. The classes, organised in a similar manner to those given in physiology and hygiene, were to be arranged by local committees in conjunction with the secretaries at the Yorkshire Training School in Leeds, the cost of the lessons being covered by local subscribers and repaid to the School at Leeds. A first lecture or talk would be given on cookery or food, and if this were successful, subsequent demonstrations and practical work would be arranged. Classes of this kind were arranged in November 1875 at Chapel Allerton, Ravensthorpe and Mirfield and they were provided spasmodically throughout the period. However, such classes were more difficult to arrange than the talks on health and hygiene, as

⁷⁷ Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book* 1874-7 (general arrangements for courses in meetings held in 1875-6); Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1877-93, Meeting of May 1885.

stoves and utensils were needed. As a result, classes of this kind tended to remain centred on Leeds and Wakefield where such equipment was readily available. A further practical problem which prevented classes in cookery and household management given to working wives from being fully developed was that the responsibilities of wives and mothers made it difficult for them to attend evening classes regularly. Attempts were made to get groups of unmarried working girls to attend classes and a scheme for teaching cookery to shop girls was reasonably successful. Of 42 who originally gave in their names, 12 attended the classes. However, attempts to get some mill girls from a "neighbouring village who normally came to Leeds on Saturday afternoons for shopping" to attend the School, were not successful. Although 48 arrived for the first lesson and seemed pleased with it, they attended no more.⁷⁸

In the light of these difficulties, the members of the Committee of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery appreciated, as Emily Kitson had done earlier, that it was the instruction of girls in elementary schools which would "be the best work of all" and would be likely to give "good, permanent results". Work of this kind was made possible by the fact that attendance at cookery lessons was permitted by the Education Code of 1875 and by the recognition of domestic economy as a "specific" subject in 1876 (although not grant-earning until 1882).⁷⁹ In 1876, the Leeds School Board asked the Leeds School of Cookery to organise lessons in cleaning and cookery for about 60 of its pupils. The course began with two lessons which included instruction on cleaning flues, blackleading, polishing grates and laying a fire. Ten lessons in cookery followed, of which two were demonstration lessons. During the remaining eight practical lessons, the children were taught basic cookery skills. The work done was carefully examined and at the end of the course prizes were given for diligence and attention. A further group of 80 girls began a new course of lessons in October 1876 and 18 girls from the previous group formed an advanced class. Further groups of children were taught and, by March 1877, 180 pupils of the Leeds School Board were being instructed in cookery.⁸⁰

In March 1877 the School Board asked the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery if it would teach cookery and domestic economy to more children at a reduction of 6d. per lesson per child since the

⁷⁸ Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1875, 19; 1876, 23-4. Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1874-7, 74 and 182-4.

⁷⁹ E. C. Kitson, *A few suggestions* (1873), 10. H. Sillitoe, *op. cit.*, 35.

⁸⁰ Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1876, 22-3 and 1877, 23-4.

Government was willing to recognise domestic economy as a specific subject and would allow a grant of 4s. for each child under instruction. The School considered that a reduction might be possible if payment for a certain number of children would be guaranteed. However, the increased numbers of children being taught would involve the Training School in fitting out more rooms and employing more teachers. At its meeting on 3 May, with Miss Maude, Mrs. Lupton and Miss Garlick representing the Training School, the School Board was asked to make a grant of £100 towards the expenses of the work. Much to the consternation of the ladies, there was a considerable delay in replying to this request and it was not until 23 July that they were informed that the "stringent requirements of the Education Council would henceforth oblige them (the School Board) to provide direct instruction in all their schools".

The effect of this denial of funds was not so disastrous as the Committee had anticipated in the summer of 1877. The School Board proved unable to organise its own course quickly and 100 girls thus continued to attend the Training School during the autumn and winter months. Moreover, many voluntary schools were eager to take advantage of the lessons available at the Training School which until that time had been closed to them because of the School's heavy commitment to the School Board of Leeds. Lessons in domestic economy were offered to the voluntary schools in Leeds for the 4s. allowed by the Government.⁸¹

The work of the teaching of schoolchildren flourished throughout the period. Classes were run on behalf of many School Boards and voluntary schools throughout Yorkshire. At the Annual General Meeting of the Ladies' Council in 1880, Mrs. Fenwick reported that children were being taught domestic economy at Leeds Parish Church and Chapel Allerton schools and also at schools in Hull, Cawthorn, Hackness, Sheffield, Driffild, Beverley and Nottingham. Indeed, classes were supplied in any area provided they did not overlap the areas of other cookery schools in the North of England.

The great expansion in the work of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery in teaching cookery and domestic economy to schoolchildren had a number of repercussions. First, additional subjects for instruction presented themselves as a natural outcome of the work already being done. For example, the increasing number of girls involved in practical cookery led to the teaching of laundry work as their teachers became increasingly aware of how imperfectly the

⁸¹ Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1874-7, 214-6, 217-22, 223, 224-5 and 228-9.

children's clothes were laundered at home.⁸² Secondly, through the Northern Union of Cookery Schools, the Yorkshire Training School attempted to persuade the Privy Council to encourage the teaching of cookery, domestic economy and laundry work by amending the Code governing the curriculum of the public elementary schools. Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all, the large number of courses for pupils attending elementary schools organised by the Training School throughout Yorkshire highlighted the total lack of trained and qualified teachers of cookery and domestic subjects and thereby focused attention on this problem.

The whole of the work of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery was very much dependent on an adequate supply of well trained and efficient teachers of cookery and domestic economy and the Committee of the Training School was aware from the beginning that obtaining such teachers was likely to be difficult. The first classes in cookery in Leeds, like those at South Kensington, had been conducted by professional lecturers like Mr. Buckmaster, and Mr. Jefferson, whose qualifications were scientific, with the demonstrations conducted by professional cooks. Other classes in Leeds conducted by Mr. Meyer, the Manager of the Great Northern Hotel and possibly himself a chef, adopted the same method. Mrs. Lupton attempted in 1874 to obtain a qualified teacher from the newly established National Training School at South Kensington and although mention is made of a Miss Fowkes being engaged to work in Leeds, there is no evidence of her having taken up her work. The cookery classes at the School were conducted by Mrs. Senior who was a skilled professional cook and, although she was somewhat unreliable and not particularly competent as a teacher, she continued to be employed by the Training School until 1877 simply because no one else was available.⁸³

The Committee of the Training School of Cookery initially planned training courses for students who wished to gain proficiency as cooks but laid stress on the fact that a further course was desirable for those wishing to become qualified "instructresses". This latter course would include tuition in all "branches" of cookery, together with instruction in physiology. The first students, Miss Rutter of Hull and Mrs. Garnett of Leeds, enrolled for a six months' course in the autumn of 1875, the fee for which was £5. The students' training seems to have been based upon attendance at the classes in each of the three "branches" of cookery, and at Mrs. Buckton's lectures in the Philosophical Hall in Leeds which, like the cookery classes, were open

⁸² H. Sillitoe, *op. cit.*, 62.

⁸³ Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1874-7, 22-3, 57-8, 120-30.

to the general public. Mrs. Buckton's lectures were also attended by students intending to take the examination conducted by the Department of Science and Art.⁸⁴ It was particularly important to the Ladies' Council and to its Training School, as to the Committees of other Schools of Cookery in the North of England, that the courses established in 1875 and 1876 should lead to a recognised certificate in cookery and to a diploma in teaching. At a meeting in Liverpool in February 1876, the Yorkshire Training School, represented by Mrs. Lupton and Mrs. Fenwick, agreed to join with the Schools of Liverpool, Edinburgh and Glasgow in forming the Northern Union of Schools of Cookery. This Northern Union asked the National Training School at South Kensington to examine its students and to grant diplomas to successful candidates. This request was refused and at a further meeting in October 1876, the Northern Union decided to grant its own certificates and diplomas. An Executive Committee was set up with Mrs. Rowland Williams of the Liverpool School as President, Miss Calder⁸⁵ as Secretary and Mrs. Lupton as Auditor. A new and more rigorous scheme of work, extending over about one year, was designed and a lady examiner appointed to assess the students' theoretical work, the Schools themselves examining the practical components of the course.

Mrs. Fenwick described the way the new training course was being constructed at the Yorkshire Training School in her Report for 1877. She stressed that the training received included the wider aspects of domestic economy and management as well as cookery. The students attended a course of 16 lectures, mainly in the evenings, on the "Nature and Properties of Food" and six lectures on the "Home, Clothing and Materials", all given by Mr. London; 16 lectures by Dr. Edith Pechey in Elementary Physiology;⁸⁶ and four lectures by Mr. Quick, M.A. on the "Science of Teaching". Details of domestic management were taught by Mrs. Theed. The students also studied the different "grades" of cookery, "household", "superior household", "sick room", "high class", and "French" cookery. They had practical lessons, saw practical lessons being given to children,

⁸⁴ Y.L.C., *Annual Report* 1875, 18-19. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 February 1876. Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1874-7, 114.

⁸⁵ Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1874-7, 171-2. H. Sillitoe, *op. cit.*, 28. Miss Calder already had close contacts with many of the ladies of the Ladies' Council as she had been secretary of the North of England Council after the resignation of Miss Clough. S. C. Lemoine, *op. cit.*, 223.

⁸⁶ This was the class following the course of animal physiology and working for the Science and Art Department Examination.

conducted them themselves and, on occasion, gave demonstration lessons. The course so developed that by 1885 the training class took the examination in domestic economy of the Society of Arts and the examinations of the Northern Union of Cookery Schools, as well as the physiology examination of the Science and Art Department. The course for intending teachers was regularly revised, laundry work being incorporated in 1889.⁸⁷ The interest of the members of the Ladies' Council in the teaching of physiology and hygiene and their realisation of the importance of teaching these subjects together with cookery, meant that the teachers of the Yorkshire School who were trained as teachers of cookery and domestic economy were also adequately trained as teachers of physiology. Unfortunately, the South Kensington course on "Animal Physiology" was not particularly suited to the needs of teachers of cookery and domestic economy and this problem was not overcome until Professor Arthur Smithells, in 1908, drew up a more appropriate science course especially for the Yorkshire Training School.⁸⁸

The Committee of the Yorkshire Training School did all that it could to encourage students to offer themselves for training. Comfortable lodgings were arranged for those whose homes were outside Leeds. Three scholarships were available and awarded annually to cover the cost of fees. Considerable financial help was often offered to other students who were otherwise unable to bear the cost of their training. The numbers of students in the training class varied considerably; there were 15 in 1877 but only two in 1880.⁸⁹ After the passing of the Technical Instruction Act and the consequent availability of "whisky money" for technical education, there was a great increase in the numbers of students in the training class, 27 enrolling in 1891.

Teachers trained at the Yorkshire Training School had little difficulty in obtaining suitable employment. In the early years, many were employed by the Training School itself to teach the classes of school children throughout Yorkshire. Others were employed directly by School Boards at salaries between £60 and £90 per annum. After 1891, the demand for teachers and the salaries offered to them

⁸⁷ Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1877-93, Meeting of May 1885. Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1889, 16.

⁸⁸ A. J. Flintham, *The Contribution of Arthur Smithells, F.R.S. (1860-1939) to the Development of Science Education in England*, University of Leeds, unpublished M.Ed. thesis (1974), 197-8 and Appendix I, 251.

⁸⁹ Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1877, 23-7; 1880, 25. Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book* 1874-7, 237-9.

increased. Miss Stephenson, the Council's most experienced teacher of Science, left Leeds in 1891 to become a teacher of technical instruction in Essex at a salary of £150 per annum.⁹⁰

A further important aspect of the work of the Ladies' Council and of its Training School of Cookery was its continuing attempt, largely by means of its membership of the Union of Northern Cookery Schools, to develop the teaching of cookery and domestic subjects particularly in the elementary schools and to maintain the standard of teacher training already established. The importance attached to the work being done and the widening recognition of the Northern Union are indicated by the fact that in 1882 Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, agreed to become patron of the Union, the Duchess succeeding him as patroness after his death. The Northern Union, realising that only if cookery and domestic subjects were recognised as grant earning under the Education Code would the teaching of these subjects be firmly established in the elementary schools, attempted to influence the Committee of Council by sending Memorials in 1877, 1882 and 1884.⁹¹ In these Memorials, the Union welcomed the payments available for the teaching of cookery and domestic subjects in the schools, suggested reforms which would encourage the teaching further and argued for the introduction of other subjects such as laundry work into the code. The Memorial of 1877 also suggested that female inspectors of domestic economy be appointed, as male inspectors were not sufficiently knowledgeable in this work.

By the later 1880s, the importance of cookery and domestic subjects was so well recognised that the Committee of Council itself suggested a scheme whereby elementary school teachers could become qualified teachers of cookery after a course of 175 lessons at a recognised training school. Although the Northern Union seems to have readily approved the scheme, the Yorkshire Training School itself was suspicious of it and feared that the adoption of the Examination Diploma "will ultimately lead to the employment of an inferior class of teacher and thereby lower the standard of efficiency".⁹² The fears of the Yorkshire Training School were, however, overcome eventually and it joined in drawing up a detailed scheme of work for the "Examination Diploma" during the Annual Meeting of the Northern

⁹⁰ Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1877-93, Meetings of January 1891 and November 1891.

⁹¹ Y.L.C., *Annual Report*, 1877, 11; 1884, 4. Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1877-93, Meeting of November 1881.

⁹² Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1877-93, Meeting of November 1868.

Union in Leeds on 1 to 3 November 1892.⁹³ The Training School was soon arranging courses for certificated teachers in conjunction with the West Riding County Council.⁹⁴

The achievements of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery from its inception in 1875 until the end of this period are great. What is particularly impressive is the business-like manner in which the teacher training course was established and maintained and the ways in which significant new areas of work such as the teaching of domestic subjects to children in elementary schools were organised throughout Yorkshire and the North of England.

From 1891 to 1902 the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery was able to take full advantage of the money which became available via the Technical Instruction Committees of the county and county borough councils,⁹⁵ although, inevitably, responsibility for teaching domestic subjects in public elementary schools was increasingly assumed first by the School Boards, and ultimately by the Local Education Authorities. In 1907, the teacher training functions of the Yorkshire Training School of Cookery were also placed in Local Authority hands, a gesture entirely consistent with the history of a Council which, having initiated developments, had always showed itself ready to cede responsibility for them to institutions and organisations with greater resources than its own.

⁹³ *Leeds Mercury*, 23 November 1892. (Report of the Annual Meeting of the Northern Union of Cookery Schools). The Northern Union became the National Union for the Technical Education of Women in Domestic Science after this meeting. The relevant Handbill is in Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1877-93.

⁹⁴ Handbill issued by the West Riding Technical Instruction Committee, "Technical Instruction for Teachers" in Y.T.S.C., *Minute Book*, 1877-93.

⁹⁵ P. R. Sharp, *The Work of the Technical Instruction Committees, 1889-1902, with specific reference to the West Riding, Lancashire and Northamptonshire*. University of Leeds, unpublished M.Ed. thesis (1969), 209-12.

OBITUARIES

CHARLES ATHELSTANE LUPTON

(1897-1977)

C. A. Lupton was a member of the Society's Council from 1966, President in 1969-72, and then a Vice-President till his death.

He came of a Leeds family notable for distinguished service to the City. His father and uncle each served as Lord Mayor, another uncle was an alderman, and a third was for over thirty years Chairman of Council of the Yorkshire College and Pro-Chancellor of the University. He wrote the history of the family in a thoroughly researched booklet *The Lupton Family in Leeds* (preface dated 1965); and he had a full measure of the family public spirit and devotion.

He was born in Leeds, qualified as a doctor at Cambridge and St Thomas's Hospital, and practised in the south of England. In retirement, he returned to Leeds, and continued an active and beneficial life up to his short last illness. He worked assiduously for his parish church, Roundhay St John's. In the Yorkshire Lower Dales Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, he was successively Assistant Secretary, Chairman, and Vice-President, and an unwearied field-worker. In the Thoresby Society, he gave himself unsparingly, helping regularly in the Library, lecturing on the earlier generations of his family, giving informative presidential addresses (two of which were published in *Miscellany* 15), and presiding with dignity and efficiency at lectures. In the work of the Council, he was assiduous, clear-headed, and wise. And in everything he showed his warm concern for human relations.

G. Woledge

KENNETH JOHN BONSER

(1892-1976)

K. J. Bonser was a member of the Society's Council from 1944, Honorary Secretary from 1946-67, and a Vice-President from 1966 till his death.

He was born in London, educated at Dulwich College and the Architectural Association School, and became an Associate of the

Royal Institute of British Architects. In the 1914 war, he served in the infantry in France, but was invalided out in 1915. He then worked as an architect for the War Graves Commission, and then with a firm of architects in Lille.

It was while he was in France that he met his wife Georgiana, a medical graduate of Manchester, then working at the Pasteur Institute; she was subsequently for many years a Cancer Research Fellow in the Leeds University Pathology Department. She shared to the full her husband's tastes and interests.

Returning to England, he came to Yorkshire in 1926, and after working for a time in Scarborough, settled in Leeds; it became his adopted home town, and he loved it and served it well.

For some thirty years, he worked as an architect in the City Engineer's Department. He designed the Tuberculosis Block at Killingbeck Hospital and the Cottingley Hall Crematorium, and was much concerned with the provision of air-raid shelters in the 1939 war. After 1948, when the official "listing" of buildings of architectural and historical importance was started, he made a survey of suitable buildings (other than churches) to be sent to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, which acknowledged its exceptional value (though it did not "list" all the buildings he suggested). He was also responsible for Tree Preservation, and both of these activities must have been as congenial as they were valuable.

His appreciation of the physical aspects of Leeds, past and present, was also shown in his contributions to the Society's publications. One was a delightful and solidly based paper on "Spas, wells, and springs of Leeds" (vol. 54 [*Miscellany* 16] 1974, pp. 29-50. The other, written jointly with Harold Nichols of the Leeds Reference Library, is a catalogue of *Printed maps and plans of Leeds, 1711-1900* (vol. 47, 1960). It is detailed and accurate, and has an enlightening introduction and copious notes; as a guide to the researcher, it will never be superseded, but it also offers the general reader a continual temptation to nostalgic browsing.

As well as of the town, he and his wife were lovers of the Yorkshire countryside. He was a foundation member of the Yorkshire Lower Dales Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, active in it for twenty eight years, and ultimately a Vice-President. Open-air exploration and documentary scholarship are combined in his masterly and much-acclaimed book, *The Drovers* (Macmillan, 1970), which presents a fascinating picture of cattle-droving and the green roads it followed in an earlier England, and is a very substantial contribution to knowledge.

The University recognised his achievement by the conferment of an honorary M.A. in 1973.

The Society is deeply indebted for his work as Honorary Secretary – painstaking and methodical, and warmed with human sympathy; he always wrote to the family of any member who died. His friendly charm made him a much-loved presence at the Society's meetings till the end of his life.

G. Woledge

THE LEEDS WORKHOUSE UNDER THE OLD POOR LAW: 1726-1834

by

PHILIP ANDERSON, B.A., M.Phil.

And the jury doe further finde that about four and twenty years agoe there was a house built by Master Richard Sykes, Master Robert Benson, Master Ralph Croft, Master Josiah Jenkinson, Master Samuell Carson, Master Francis Jackson and diverse other Inhabitants of the Borough of Leeds which said house is built on the place where the old free schoole formerly stood and in the yard belonging to the same schoole which said house soe there built was designed and since soe used and exercised as a comon Workehouse soe commonly called a house of Correction for the releife and setting on Worke the poor of the said Parish of Leeds.

(The Second Decree of Pious Uses, 30 May 1663.)

THE LEEDS WORKHOUSE was established in 1638, and for the next two centuries was to serve as the symbol of the Old Poor Law in Leeds. In the century following its establishment the intentions of its founding fathers were not always adhered to, and the period witnessed several closures of the building and alterations in the purposes for which it was used. However, from 1738 the Workhouse remained in continuous use, and provides an excellent example of a provincial workhouse attempting to deal with the problems of destitution in the face of rapid urban growth and industrialisation. The following article is a brief history of the development of the Workhouse, looking first at the origins of the institution and the evolution of its premises, and then considering its changing function and its administration in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The paucity of surviving source material relating to the Workhouse has necessitated the use of scattered and fragmentary data. However, the detailed Workhouse Minutes for the periods 1726-70 and 1818-24 have survived and provide a backbone for this study. The gap in the Minutes between 1770 and 1818 is regrettable since it covers one of the most critical periods in the Workhouse's development. However, the Leeds Parish Vestry Minutes and local newspapers, which provide useful material throughout, are of especial value in this period by throwing much needed light on the fate of the Workhouse.

Origins and Historical Background

Ralph Thoresby, writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century, confirmed the findings of the Inquiry into Pious Uses of 1663 that the Workhouse was erected at the expense of some of the town's principal inhabitants in 1638. The building was situated at the north corner of the junction of Lady Lane and North Street, a site which it was to occupy for over two centuries. Thoresby also asserted that for many years the house had served only as a hospital for the reception of the poor, and if this is true it may be correct to see the building as a poorhouse rather than a workhouse. However, the Leeds Corporation Minutes for the year 1662 reveal that an attempt was made to set the poor to work, and Minutes for later years suggest that similar efforts were repeatedly made.¹ The Lady Lane building was still, at least nominally, a workhouse in 1704, but in that year, for reasons which are not apparent, the institution was closed and the premises turned over to the newly-established Charity School. Confusingly, the Minute Book of the Charity School firmly denied that the building was ever used as a workhouse. It stated that "The Old Charity School situate near the North-bar was founded by Richard Sykes, Alderman, Robert Benson and other inhabitants with the town's money for a workhouse, but was never employed that way. It was employed many years as a hospital for the reception of aged and infirm poor people to save charges in paying rents, who carded and scribbled wool for the clothiers".²

It is thus conjecture whether the establishment of the Workhouse in 1726 should more properly be regarded as a re-opening, but it is important that the events of that year be set in a wider context. The Old Poor Law is generally considered to date from 1601, the year which saw the final enactment and consolidation of the Elizabethan Poor Law. This collection of laws regrouped and restated previous pieces of legislation and presented very little which was new. Also, the 1601 Act contained no direct reference to workhouses, mentioning only "necessary places of habitation" for the impotent poor. It was not until 1663 that Sir Matthew Hale brought the idea of workhouses to the public notice, although some of the ideas had been maturing for over a century, ever since the legislation of 1536 which had attempted to make a distinction between those who could not work and those who

¹ Court Books of the Leeds Corporation. *Thoresby Society Publications*, XXXIV (1936), 2, 42 *passim* (1672), 49 (1674). In all cases in the text dates before 1752 have been adjusted to New Style dating.

² Leeds City Archives (hereafter L.C.A.) DB/196/1. Minute Book of the Charity School.

would not. It was in 1662 that the foundation of the Laws of Settlement was laid,³ significantly at the same time that Leeds was renewing its efforts to set the poor to work. This legislation confirmed that each parish was responsible for those paupers born within its boundaries, and enabled parishes to remove those without settlement back to their place of origin. Supplementary pieces of legislation to the 1662 Act were passed at regular intervals, and many statutes were passed in attempts to clarify the position of those born illegitimately. As was the case with most Poor Law legislation, the acts tended to ratify and to attempt to clarify what had become established practice, at least in many parishes. In 1695-6 a private Act was passed which authorised the building of a workhouse in Bristol.⁴ It is widely believed that Bristol enjoyed a high measure of success in administering its workhouse, especially with regard to the lowering of costs in giving relief to the poor. In fact this view is probably unduly optimistic, as there is evidence that by 1714 the Bristol Workhouse was heavily in debt and that many of the ideas of its founders had to be seriously amended.⁵ Nevertheless other areas were encouraged to follow the Bristol example, perhaps imitating the initiative of Bristol rather than the methods used there. Workhouses in other areas were founded by means of private Acts and were sometimes included in more general Acts which aimed at improving or regulating the giving of charity. It was not until 1722-3 that a general Act was passed which empowered the establishment of workhouses.⁶ This Act gave parish officers the right to acquire workhouses on behalf of their parishes and to reach agreements with local businessmen regarding provisions for, and even the farming out of, the poor. The Justices of the Peace were expressly prevented from interfering with matters of relief until proper application had been made to the parish overseers of the Vestry. The act also laid down that those persons who declined to enter workhouses should receive no relief – a process which later became known as the ‘workhouse test’.

It was only three years after the passing of the general Act that the Workhouse was established in Leeds. Whether there was any direct link between the two events is impossible to state, although it does appear a reasonable surmise. Certainly the Bristol experiment was viewed with interest by some of the parties responsible for establishing the Leeds institution, and the lowering of costs in relieving the poor

³ 14 Car. II. c. 12 (1662).

⁴ 7 & 8 Will. III. c. 32 Pr. (1695-6).

⁵ Anon., *An Account of the Work-Houses in Great Britain in the Year 1732* (1786).

⁶ 9 Geo. I. c. 7 (1722-3).

was a major motivating force for these people. In March 1726, a meeting of the Grand Jury held in the Moot Hall declared "that for the more orderly and easily regulating and relieving the poor people belonging to the township of Leeds it will be proper and necessary that a workhouse be built and erected in some convenient part of the said township wherein the said poor people be employed to worke which must of consequence lessen the charge which the said township are now at in relieving and providing for the said poor of the said town".⁷

This emphasis on economy was unfortunate in that three years after its inception the Workhouse was found to be in debt. The high hopes of 1726 that the establishment would prove virtually self-supporting had been cruelly dashed, and in 1729 the decision was finally taken by the Vestry to discontinue the Workhouse. The inmates of the Workhouse were for the most part old, sick or very young, and attempts to make such a group a profitable work-force were, not surprisingly, abortive. Nevertheless, the notion of economy prevailed sufficiently for it to be paramount when the Workhouse was re-opened in 1738. What the events were which persuaded the Vestry to take the decision to re-open the Workhouse remains uncertain, although the return of William Cookson to the office of mayor (the Workhouse had been established in his previous mayoralty in 1726) may have had some influence. It was with some apparent reluctance that the Vestry did eventually decide that a workhouse was once again needed, and great stress was laid on the institution being run "in as frugal a manner as may be at the expense of the Towne".⁸

Buildings

The building which housed the Leeds Workhouse was a substantial stone and brick structure situated in a large walled yard. Initially in 1726 the building was utilised on a haphazard basis without any structural re-organisation, the rooms which existed merely being used as dormitories, sick-rooms or workrooms as the Committee thought best. However, after the resumption in 1738 it was decided that extensions were desirable, and in 1740 a building was added to the east end of the site. This added the facilities of a brew-house, a wash-house, a coalhouse, a workroom, a granary and an infirmary. The erection of purpose-built rooms allowed the original building to be more properly organised to provide sleeping accommodation for a greater number and to house an additional workroom for the younger inmates. Over

⁷ L.C.A. DB/197/1. Minutes of the Committee of Pious Uses, 2 March 1726.

⁸ Minutes of the Vestry of Leeds Parish Church, 22 Sept. 1738.

the succeeding hundred years several additions and alterations were made to the premises, but it is very difficult to discern from the records exactly when they were made. The chief difficulty is that the Minutes of the Committee show when plans were first laid for alterations, but later Minutes show that these orders were frequently not carried through, and on occasions were never begun at all. Nevertheless, it is possible to state with certainty that by 1771 the facilities which the house possessed included two workrooms, a dining-room and kitchen, several dormitories, an infirmary, five or six cells or apartments for lunatics, lodgings for the Master and Mistress, a committee room, a dungeon, store-rooms, washrooms and the usual offices.

Around 1800 the Workhouse Board appears to have wished to consolidate its offices into one specially-built building, where other civic and charitable organisations could also be administered. It is impossible precisely to date this move, as it is necessary to rely almost entirely on map evidence. Reference is made to an Orphan House, which may have been the separate building at the east end of the Workhouse shown on the Giles map of 1815. Since it was not shown on the Tuke map of 1781, it seems likely that it was built between 1781 and 1815, and in all probability towards the end of this period.⁹ The premises also included a three-storey building which housed the vagrancy office on the ground floor, and whose upper storeys in 1843 were used as "rooms and dormitories for the poor". This building was presumably the culmination of the Committee's desire for administrative offices. From contemporary maps it is known that there were two other buildings in the yard, but it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty what they were used for. The ground area of the premises at the beginning of the nineteenth century was 1,100 square yards, and in 1809 the buildings were valued at £2,500 and the contents at £500.

Administration: (a) The Officials

The structure of the administration of the Workhouse in Leeds was highly unusual, and indeed could lay claim to deserving the description of unique. The body which held the responsibility for administering all aspects of the Poor Law was the Workhouse Board which was officially a committee of the Vestry of Leeds Parish Church. The Workhouse Board referred to itself in its own Minutes as the "Com-

⁹ K. J. Bonser & H. Nichols, "Printed maps and plans of Leeds, 1711-1900", *Thoresby Society Publications*, XLVII (1960). This gives locations and details of the major maps of Leeds.

mittee", but others referred to its members as the "Guardians", and this term came to be used so widely that by common usage the word took on official meaning. At other times the names "Committee" and "Board" were used interchangeably. Basically, the Committee consisted of three distinct groups: the Overseers, the Churchwardens and the Trustees, and these three groups existed in a state of perpetual conflict, and the extent to which this hindered the everyday running of the Workhouse was a continuous theme throughout the period.¹⁰

The Master

A further area of conflict for the Committee was that of staff management. At the time of the re-establishment of the Leeds Workhouse in 1726 no direct provision was made for a staff to administer the institution. It would appear that the desire to set up the Workhouse in as short a time as possible took precedence over any preliminary planning. A Workhouse Master, Mr. Kent, was appointed when the Workhouse opened, but all other appointments were made when the need arose. Thus, the Speight family, consisting of man and wife and two sons aged twenty-two and eighteen were engaged to teach the children to spin with the Dutch wheel and to card to it. The Speights were expected to work from five in the morning until seven at night, and were to receive £50 per annum "as they have occasion for it".¹¹ Within two years Mr. Speight had been warned against attempting to make excessive profits, and had received a cut in wages because of dissatisfaction with his work. However, if the Committee was far from satisfied with the endeavours of Mr. Speight, it was even less satisfied with Mr. Kent, the Workhouse Master. Only a year after taking office, Kent was discharged from his duties, receiving a month's notice, five pounds and his fare to London. His successor, Robert Milnor, was to receive £20 per annum, and some evidence is provided as to perhaps why the Committee was displeased with the original choice of Master. One of the tasks entrusted to Milnor was to visit all the local clothiers and to demand on oath what was owed to the Committee. The wisdom of this move is shown by the fact that £17 3s. 9d. was recovered from one source alone.

When the Workhouse closed in 1729, less than three years after its opening, the Committee had enjoyed a far from happy experience with

¹⁰ For an analysis of the composition of the Committee, see D. Fraser, "Poor Law Politics in Leeds, 1833-1855", *Thoresby Society Miscellany*, 15 (1971), 23. See also, in the same *Miscellany*, D. Fraser, "The Leeds Churchwardens, 1828-1850".

¹¹ L.C.A. Minute and Order Books of the Leeds Guardians of the Poor (hereafter Workhouse Minutes), LO/M1, 2 July 1726.

regard to its staff. It had had occasion to dismiss one Master, and had not received from the Speight family the amount of work which it had expected. Hence, when the Workhouse was re-opened in 1738, it is surprising to discover that there were no significant changes in the Committee's handling of staff. The Master, Thomas Akers, was paid a weekly wage of 7s. in addition to his 3s. board, instead of an annual salary as had been the case previously, but the policy of appointing other staff when and if the need arose continued. This resulted in some inmates being given the opportunity to earn money by performing specific tasks such as gate-keeping or school-teaching. If the Committee had difficulty in obtaining suitable people to employ, it could well have been because it expected a very high standard, and also because it constantly demanded more of its employees. This was demonstrated by the Committee's exhorting Akers to increase his efforts, less than a month after he had taken up his position. The mistrust between Committee and Master continued, and in 1742 a new Master was engaged at a salary of £5 for three months, but was warned that he would be kept under close scrutiny and that only a month's notice would be given before dismissal. The records of the Committee show that the Master was indeed closely supervised, and although he made repeated efforts to obtain permission for his wife to join him, his wish was only granted a year after his appointment. It appears that if the relationship between the Committee and the staff was a strained one, at least some of the blame could be directed towards the Committee. It should also be emphasised that some of the quarrels were over very trivial incidents. A good example of this occurred in 1746, when Nathaniel Dawson came into conflict with the Committee immediately after being appointed Master, over the unlikely question of his right to the manure from the House.

The overriding problem for the Committee was finding a Master who reached the standard desired. The role of the Master is difficult to define in that there were numerous tasks which he was expected to perform, and these varied with time. His primary function was to look after the physical requirements of the Workhouse inmates, and to preserve order and discipline in the House. The Master also had to ensure that the inmates were clean and well-dressed, especially on Sundays when they attended the Parish Church and were in the public eye. Other duties included supervising the provisions for the House, returning some of the applicants for relief to their places of settlement, co-operating with other institutions and acting in conjunction with the Committee over admissions to, and dismissals from, the Workhouse. In many of these areas the Master was expected to act on his own in-

initiative, but his actions were kept under review by the Committee and the Vestry. At times the attempt to serve the wishes of two bodies simultaneously proved too difficult and was an additional source of strain.

The Committee was consistently anxious to establish a good reputation for the Workhouse in the eyes of the township. Blame was laid at the Master's door for those inmates who returned from church in a drunken state, and in general a high moral standard was expected. The Master, however, had few means at his disposal for enforcing standards. The most frequently used penalties were reductions in food, incarceration in the dark room or dungeon, or even the threat of dismissal. If the Master found that none of these methods was effective, resort was usually made to the House of Correction. The Master also had to act on his own initiative, at least in the first instance, on matters of admission to the Workhouse. The Committee had overall control of indoor relief and reviewed the situation at its weekly meetings, but the day-to-day decisions lay with the Master, who was clearly hampered at times by the limited space at his disposal, and also by the fact that any decision which he made could be countermanded later by the Committee.

The idea that the Workhouse Master had a free hand to indulge in exploitation of the poor probably arose from a number of nineteenth-century scandals, and in particular the Andover incident, but the eighteenth-century Leeds experience was of a totally different nature. The Committee demanded a high standard of proficiency and kept the Master under constant surveillance, even though on occasions this meant a high turnover of staff. For example, after the untimely death of Robert Linsley in 1754 the Master's position was taken by a Mr. Ward; but no sooner had he settled in his post than the Committee decided that he was not qualified for his office, and he was dismissed "for his neglect of duty and insolent behaviour".¹² Ward's successor had only just settled into the job when he died. The salary of the Master was by contemporary standards high, but the problem remained for the Committee to find someone who not only met its high standards, but was healthy enough to endure the poor conditions in which he had to work.

Ironically, in the late 1750s a Master was found who met the requirements of the Committee; but after four years he was dismissed after intense pressure from the township following the death of a Workhouse inmate. The Committee stood by its employee, but

¹² L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M4, 16 July 1755.

ultimately had to bow to public pressure. The next incumbent was Matthew Earnshaw, who was to remain Master for some seventeen years. Earnshaw appears to have been better educated than his predecessors, and use was made of his clerical abilities by appointing him secretary to the Committee. A fundamental question, however, is why Earnshaw should have been the first Master whose appointment had any significant measure of permanence. For nearly forty years prior to 1762 there had been a succession of Masters who had either left, or, much more frequently, been replaced within a few months of taking office. Part of the blame must rest on the Committee which, as has been shown, insisted on a very high standard and also at times made hasty and ill-considered appointments. It is also true that Leeds was among the first towns to establish a workhouse, and that in the earlier years there did not exist a body of potential employees who had experience in administering such an institution. Earnshaw appears to have been the first Master who did not fall foul of the Committee or arouse dislike in the town. It is, however, significant that in the months following Earnshaw's appointment repeated exhortations had to be made to members to attend Committee meetings. Indeed for some months no business was recorded at all, and it appears that this decline in enthusiasm by the Committee gave the Master more freedom to handle matters on his own initiative.

The situation with regard to other staff did not improve until around 1780 when, once the Committee had satisfied itself that a Master could be obtained who met its high standards, the decision was taken to expand the staff, and particularly to increase the number of appointments with specific and well-defined responsibilities. Unfortunately the records do not permit a detailed study of when and how each appointment was made, and it is not until the 1820s that a comprehensive view is possible. At this time, although the staff had increased, the Master and Mistress were still key figures. They had a salary of fifty guineas a year in addition to the somewhat dubious privilege of being entitled to any benefits arising from the sale of the urine and pigs' dung. The Master and Mistress were directly answerable to the Committee, and their basic duties remained fundamentally what they had been from the inception of the institution. By 1820, however, the amount of work had increased considerably, in that there was a greater number of inmates, and the financial resources of the institution were severely stretched at this time.

Apothecaries

The apothecaries appointed to the Workhouse fought a similar

battle to be able to work without constant interference and scrutiny. In 1746 an apothecary declared three months after his appointment that he "cannot afford to serve the House upon the conditions made",¹³ and this cry was reiterated many times in the next twenty years. The two major points of objection by the apothecaries were that they had to attend every weekly Committee meeting, and that they could not attend inmates without prior permission from the Committee. This somewhat despotic stance by the Committee created conflict and also resulted in delays before illnesses could be diagnosed. The conflict became acute in 1750, when a badly-attended Committee meeting appointed an apothecary with a wide brief, in direct opposition to a Committee decision of the previous week which had appointed a different apothecary with restricted powers. Eventually the situation was resolved, but the Committee could hardly have enjoyed the confidence of its staff when appointments could be made and undone in the space of a week.

The apothecaries had been an integral part of the Workhouse staff from the beginning, but by the 1820s their position had become firmly established, both with regard to salary and to the extent of their duties. Two surgeons were appointed by the Committee at a salary of fifty guineas each, in addition to 5s. for each labour which they treated. Also they were to receive ten guineas for attending Irish and Scottish paupers and those whose places of settlement were outside Leeds. The duties of the apothecaries were simply defined as attending anyone who had a note from the overseers, and it is significant that the notes were not confined to the poor of Leeds township. Responsibility for the mentally handicapped had very largely been removed, as the majority of "idiots" and "lunatics" were sent to the asylum at Wakefield.

Treasurer

The Treasurer to the Committee was the highest-paid official, with an annual salary of £120. He was appointed by the Vestry, but the Committee was empowered to dismiss him for misconduct. His duties were to prepare the annual accounts of the Workhouse and to advise the Committee as to the financial state of the institution. The work also involved corresponding with Poor Law officials in other areas concerning Leeds paupers who were being housed in other regions, and also obtaining payment for Leeds Workhouse inmates who had settlement elsewhere. The Treasurer was also responsible for obtaining any legal advice which the Committee requested, and for advising on issues of national legislation and national Poor Law policy.

¹³ L.C.A. Query Book of the Master. LO/Q1, 9 Apr. 1746.

Other Staff

The expansion of the Workhouse in the nineteenth century both in regard to the numbers with which it dealt and the increasing roles which it was expected to play meant that a number of new staff positions came into being. One such was the officer appointed as Town Husband whose duty was to look after bastardy cases. He gave 5s. to anyone who gave him information concerning pregnant women whose places of settlement were outside Leeds. Leeds officials were anxious to see changes in the laws relating to bastardy, especially desiring that the woman should only have a summary remedy against the man. Nevertheless the problem did not cause too great concern because it was generally conceded that, bearing in mind the increase in population, bastardy had not increased greatly in Leeds. Edward Baines, among others, was at pains to ascribe some of the credit for this to the Town Husband. Perhaps because of the high esteem in which the job was held, the annual salary was eighty guineas.

A related office was that of Collector of the Arrears of Bastardy, who collected all outstanding debts upon bastardy cases. He performed his duties at his own expense, but was allowed five per cent of all monies collected, and, in some instances, travelling expenses. Other members of the staff were the schoolteacher and nurses, billet masters, and assistant overseers, all of whom were appointed when and if the need arose. Apart from these, various other functions were performed on an honorary basis, usually by members of the Committee. Two purveyors were appointed half-yearly to purchase provisions and to purchase and distribute clothing to both the indoor and outdoor poor. A further two members of the Committee served as House Visitors; this job was performed by all the Committee during the year on a rota basis. Their function was to visit the Workhouse every day and to check the standard of provisions, cleanliness and behaviour of inmates, and to record their findings in a book. Other Committee members served as auditors of the Treasurer's accounts (three members), Bastardy accounts (two), Constables' accounts (two), butcher's meat (one, half-yearly), meat and malt (one, half-yearly) and groceries (one, half-yearly). In 1822 there was established a Committee of Arbitration consisting of five "intelligent persons" who were to attend to all cases of appeal or disputed settlement, without having recourse to legal proceedings. The enforcement of the laws of settlement was a time-consuming task and this Committee was an attempt to bypass lengthy and expensive proceedings.

The amount of money paid in wages each year was a large percentage of the total Workhouse expenditure. However, the Com-

mittee defended this policy by claiming that higher wages resulted in better appointments, and that, by employing better-qualified and more efficient staff, it was able to save money in the long term. The cost of having an inefficient or dishonest Treasurer had been highlighted in 1817;¹⁴ similarly the Committee had realised that paying a higher wage to the Master had resulted in a higher standard of work. The crucial role of the Master in being a direct link between Committee and inmates was emphasised in the 1820s when there occurred a return to the eighteenth-century pattern of the Master's falling foul of the Committee. In 1821 the Master was reprimanded because he "did use language disrespectful to the Board and insulting to individual members of it".¹⁵ Shortly afterwards the Master was again reprimanded, but disquiet did not grow into anything more for a further two years, when the Maria Sleddin incident showed the gulf between Master and Committee, and also the falling respect with which the public viewed the Workhouse.

Maria Sleddin was removed from Burnley to Leeds in April 1823 by a magistrate's order, but neither town was willing to accept responsibility for her, and, despite the fact that she was in the last stages of pregnancy, she was moved from one town to the other. Finally, after having given birth to a stillborn child, Maria Sleddin died. The Workhouse Board set up its own investigation as to why the woman had not been allowed into the Workhouse, and to what extent the Master, Joseph Littlewood, was to blame. Baines published the findings, which concluded that there were not sufficient grounds to warrant a criminal charge, but he also published the views of Benjamin Sadler, the mayor, and of Thomas Tennant and Henry Hall, who listed the qualities shown by Littlewood, and cited his previous good conduct.¹⁶ The Vestry, which in this instance as in many others echoed widespread public opinion, felt that this verdict was an attempt at whitewashing and had been arrived at to prevent further action being taken against Littlewood. In the event, Littlewood continued in office, but it is significant how much controversy the Sleddin incident generated. It also served to emphasise the fact that the Master was the one member of the Workhouse administration who was constantly in the public eye, and that if an unsuitable person were appointed, it resulted in acute embarrassment for the Committee and at worst a loss of public confidence.

¹⁴ See p. 101.

¹⁵ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 19 Oct. 1821.

¹⁶ Leeds City Reference Library L.362.5SL23. Examinations taken in the case of Maria Sleddin, 1823.

Administration: (b) Finances

Having to support the large staff which it employed presented the Committee with some financial difficulties. Unfortunately it was not until the 1820s that a regular series of accounts was presented, a fact which necessarily focuses attention on the later years of the period. Before the nineteenth century the Committee was very reluctant to make public any details of its accounts, with the exception of how much revenue had been raised by the direct efforts of the inmates. For most of the eighteenth century there was a body of opinion, usually voiced in the Vestry, which believed that the Committee was extravagant in its spending, and the Committee, for its part, was unwilling to furnish its opponents with any potential weapons. However, sustained pressure of public opinion finally persuaded the Committee to publish its accounts in 1818.

The accounts revealed that the primary source of revenue was the poor rate, which was levied twice yearly. The money was collected by the overseers in their individual districts, and was assessed in much the same manner as modern rates in that the basis was the rateable value of buildings and land. The actual rate in the pound was decided by the Vestry usually after having been advised by the Workhouse Committee. The assessments were made in May and November (sometimes December), and if the need arose the Committee was empowered to raise an additional assessment. The collection of the poor rate could be anticipated by obtaining a bank loan. Thus in 1821 the Committee had a loan of £15,380 9s. 5d. from Fields and Co., which in that year was the only bank with which it had dealings. A recurring problem for the Committee was that of "leakages", that is, the difference between the amount of revenue which should have been collected, and the amount which the overseers actually did manage to collect. Leakages arose partly through administrative inefficiency and partly through refusal or inability to pay by those assessed. In 1820 the figure for leakages was £891 8s. 1d. The other sources of revenue for the Committee were apprenticeship fines and various sundry items, of which the most important were soldiers' pensions and the fruits of the efforts of the inmates of the Workhouse. However, the poor rate was by far the most important source of revenue, as is shown by the fact that in 1831-2 it raised £25,268 9s. 8d. out of a total revenue of £28,849 3s. 4d.

The major items of expenditure were the payments to the outdoor poor, food, clothing and heating for the Workhouse, and payments to other institutions such as the Lunatic Asylum and House of Recovery whose facilities were used by the Committee. Other significant items were the sums paid for legal advice, the amount paid in estreat money,

and the various components of "sundry expenditure". This last comprised a variety of activities engaged in by the Committee, the majority of which were not directly concerned with relief of the poor and which show the Committee functioning as a civic body in a wider sphere.

Throughout the 1820s the accounts revealed a stable financial situation, with most years showing a small balance in hand of which the 1831-2 figure of £450 is typical. There is no evidence that any of the Committee members were called on personally to provide any money, even for short-term loans. The public view was that the Committee should be able to meet all its commitments with the money raised from the poor rate and the sundry items of revenue. That the Committee was largely able to do this could perhaps be heralded as a success for a body which, in addition to its main duties, engaged in such seemingly incongruous activities as tending pigs and attempting to curtail the activities of bawdy houses.

The changing opinions as to what function the Workhouse should perform also had an effect on the manner in which relief was given. As attitudes changed with time, so the forms in which relief was given changed. For the first fifty years of the Workhouse's existence, a flexible system operated, by which the overseers for the various wards of the township attempted to judge each case on its merits and had little or nothing in the way of overriding general principles. Flexibility was reduced as the scale of poverty increased, and attempts were made, with varying degrees of success, to implement policies agreed upon by the Workhouse Committee.

Admission to the Workhouse and the Organization of Relief

When the Workhouse was established in 1726, the overseers drew up a list of persons thought proper to be received into the institution. Those who declined to enter the building were denied any further outdoor relief, and thus the system had instituted a "workhouse test" which used the establishment as a deterrent. On the re-opening of the Workhouse in 1738, the building was found to be too small to accommodate all those whom the overseers recommended should receive indoor relief, so that the deterrent effect was considerably reduced. Thereafter the policy arose of housing the old or the sick and relying on outdoor relief to aid the able-bodied poor. Many of the sick entered the Workhouse already suffering from smallpox or other contagious diseases, and, as there existed no separate lodgings for these people, epidemics were no rarity in the Workhouse. Indeed, in January 1741 nearly a quarter of the Workhouse population died. Entry to the

Workhouse was determined by the Committee, although in the first instance application might be made to one of the overseers or to the Master.¹⁷ A destitute person would present himself to the Committee, which would judge the merits of the case and act accordingly. There was rarely an investigation of the circumstances of an applicant: the verbal testimony of the man himself was all that was considered necessary. In some instances an overseer might recommend that a person be taken into the Workhouse, in which case the Committee would review the overseer's report, and not necessarily interview the person involved at all. Also, strangers to the town or those in acute distress often presented themselves at the door of the Workhouse. The Master would then decide on his own initiative whether to grant immediate entry, and the Committee would sanction the decision at its next meeting. The Committee also adjudicated over the granting of outdoor relief, but in reality the overseers had a large degree of independence in administering relief in their respective areas.

It was also the Committee's decision which determined which inmates were turned out of the Workhouse for disciplinary reasons or because it was believed that they were capable of supporting themselves. The greatest problem facing the Committee, however, was the number of paupers who were constantly leaving the Workhouse or being dismissed, only to reappear a short time later in a destitute condition. In the last resort the Workhouse usually gave refuge to those who had nowhere else to go, so the Committee was faced with a number of people who were in and out of the institution over a long period of time.¹⁸ The problem often involved whole families whose members were regular inmates of the Workhouse, and the Committee was of the opinion that the habit was passed from one generation to the next.

The workhouse system functioned with outdoor relief as its solid basis. By the middle of the eighteenth century the majority of those in need of assistance were granted outdoor relief, and the Committee resorted to the law in attempts to force parents to provide for their children, and in general to persuade wealthier members of families to assist their less fortunate relatives. This basis allowed the Committee to concentrate on those who could not fit into the general framework of relief, and, at least in theory, to judge each case on its merits. This enabled special arrangements to be made in some cases, such as teaching the blind to play the violin, or lending wheels to some inmates

¹⁷ See L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M3.

¹⁸ See R. Strong, "The Leeds Workhouse in the Eighteenth Century", Yorkshire Archaeological Society, *Local History Bulletin*, no. 12 (1976).

to enable them to spin. Also, the fact that the majority of those in need were receiving outdoor relief enabled the Workhouse to divert resources to treating special cases. Usually this took the form of utilising the facilities of special institutions such as lunatic asylums or eye hospitals.

Although it was not practicable in every instance, the Committee tried to ensure that every inmate made a contribution towards his own upkeep. Caution was also observed with regard to those who received benefits from Friendly Societies and similar bodies. Although they were not refused admission to the Workhouse, they were looked on with suspicion if their stay was a long one. This suspicion of Friendly Society members became more noticeable during the nineteenth century, but as early as 1751 an order was made that anybody who had a pension was to sign it over to the Committee on entering the Workhouse. Two other strands of policy which emerged during the course of the eighteenth century were the Committee's attempt to gain support from the courts of law, and the entrusting of money to others for the relief of a third party. The Committee looked to the law to ensure that families supported any of their number who had fallen on hard times, and that the cost should be met from the family involved, and not from the public purse. This policy was adhered to with increasing frequency as its success became ever more apparent. The entrusting of money to third parties arose in part from an effort to reduce the amount of administrative work for the Workhouse staff, but also it was designed to maintain those on outdoor relief who if helped by neighbours could remain outside the Workhouse.

As the number of inmates in the Workhouse increased, more onus was placed on the overseers to administer relief at their own discretion. Pregnant women were supported on outdoor relief, but the overseers had to decide who were the most deserving cases, and these would be permitted to enter the Workhouse's lying-in wards – a facility for which there was a constantly increasing demand. In general, however, the Committee preferred to rely on outdoor relief as the main source of support, because the Workhouse was so frequently overcrowded. Also by 1760 some inmates had adopted the practice of seeking relief in the House during the cold winter months, dismissing themselves for the spring and summer and then seeking re-admission when the weather got worse. Although this removed some of the pressure on resources during the summer, the Committee was opposed to it and endeavoured to force these paupers to rely on outdoor aid all year round. The Committee did, however, have a number of inmates in its charge who had made the House their effectual home for a number of years. It was also

left to the discretion of the Committee to determine whether or not the inmates should surrender all their goods and belongings on entering the Workhouse. A strict interpretation of this law resulted in fewer applications, and the Committee did on occasion use this to reduce numbers in the House. The mechanics of relief were affected by the views expressed in public and especially in the Vestry, where there existed a hard core of opinion that only "real objects" of charity should receive aid. The Committee had to bear public opinion in mind at all times, but by the end of the eighteenth century a certain flexibility had returned to the admission of paupers to the Workhouse, because the Master had the confidence of the Committee and was able to act more on his own initiative. Outdoor relief, however, was still the basic element of the system at the end of the eighteenth century, as can be seen from F. M. Eden's figures, which showed 154 people in the Workhouse compared with 415 regular, and 251 casual, outdoor poor.¹⁹ The direct cost of maintaining a person in the Workhouse was approximately fifty per cent higher than supporting a person on outdoor relief, so there was no financial advantage to be gained by increasing the population of the Workhouse.

In 1818, when detailed records again allow a more intensive investigation, the system had not changed significantly from the 1770s. Resolutions continued to be made to restrict payments to those who were, in the Committee's view, declared objects of charity. However, there was some flexibility in awarding relief, as is shown by a number of instances when applicants were given the choice of entering the Workhouse or receiving outdoor relief. The attitude towards applicants did harden appreciably after one specific incident in 1818 when it was discovered that an overseer had been tricked into paying some paupers twice. The Vestry immediately ordered an investigation, and suspended all payments in that division of the township; but subsequently no major revisions were made to the system. The overseer was supposedly a safeguard against fraudulent activity, in that he was supposed to investigate cases, but when destitution was at a high level he was unable usually to investigate every applicant. Also, the use of a false name or a false address was difficult to detect. Applicants to the Workhouse usually had to be totally destitute before gaining entry, but this was not the case with persons seeking outdoor relief. If an applicant was receiving an income which did not cover basic expenditure, then the Committee was on occasion willing to offer financial aid. It was realised that if temporary assistance were given

¹⁹ F. M. Eden, "The State of the Poor" (abridged, A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), 361.

then at least a proportion of those on outdoor relief would be able to avoid entering the Workhouse. Those who were termed "casual poor" were receiving temporary aid to tide them over a bad period, which was usually caused by illness or loss of a job, especially when it affected the breadwinner of a family. For those who did enter the Workhouse there was little prospect of breaking the "poverty circle". Usually totally destitute, they had very slight prospects of employment, and in the majority of cases they only left the institution because a relative had been willing to take responsibility for them. Even the few who did find work had to be supported on outdoor relief, at least for a time, because they entered employment without any immediate means of supporting themselves. Some inmates did persuade the Committee to let them try to find work in other areas of the country, but the Committee Minutes reveal that a very low percentage of these attempts were successful.

At various times in the history of the Workhouse, attempts were made to emphasise the "work" aspect. Initially these attempts were aimed at reducing costs and at making the Workhouse self-supporting. Later, the theoretical basis for such attempts was to make life harder for the inmates and thus make the Workhouse the last source of refuge for those in need. By 1834 this concept had become known as "less eligibility". It is notable that these attempts to set the poor to work were attended with a marked lack of success. Originally the work had been primarily spinning clothiers' wool and also spinning flax to make into warps which with wool weft was woven into "wolsey", but the cost of raw materials and the poor standard of workmanship soon condemned this to becoming an uneconomic venture. At various times other forms of labour were introduced, such as the notorious task of picking oakum, or cleaning the streets, but invariably the schemes failed. Schemes tended to be introduced when public opinion reached a peak in demanding that the indoor poor should "earn their keep", and once opinion had been appeased the ideas were discarded until the next outburst.

The system of relief in general in Leeds came under attack in the 1820s, and in the immediate aftermath of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act it came to be questioned further. Changes had had to be made in the 1820s, because the scale of poverty had by this time far exceeded what was ever envisaged when the system was devised. The changes were well described by Matthew Johnson and Alfred Power, the district Poor Law Commissioner, to a Select Committee in 1838,²⁰

²⁰ See the evidence brought before the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act (P.P. 1837-8, XVIII).

and they also represented the feelings of the Leeds public that the "work" aspect had been neglected in the recent past. With regard to the practice of giving outdoor relief, Johnson confirmed that until 1834 an applicant would approach the Workhouse Board and would be given relief according to his declared needs and circumstances. After 1834 every applicant had to approach the overseer of the ward in which he resided, and the overseer was then to investigate the case. Johnson was forced to concede that theory did not always accord with practice in that frequently the overseer was either incompetent or too over-worked to investigate every case. It was also conceded that there had arisen a need for a full-time Relieving Officer.

In attempting to assess the relief system as it was operated in Leeds, it must be remembered that various sources of contemporary criticism are not altogether reliable. Complaints of ill-treatment by recipients of relief were not infrequent, and, while some appear to have foundation, a number were clearly exaggerated. After 1834 the Committee was criticised for not conducting its affairs in accordance with the principles of the Poor Law Amendment Act. However, cyclical unemployment created destitution on a scale which made such principles inoperable. In particular the "workhouse test" could not be applied at these times, and relief had to be given on a large scale, which in the short term bordered on the indiscriminate giving of charity.

The relief system had been based on the giving of outdoor relief, with indoor relief reserved for those in exceptional circumstances. This basis remained unchanged over the whole period, although, as pressures on resources increased, some amendments had to be made to the system. The individuality which had marked some of the early decisions of the Committee disappeared as the scale of poverty increased and the cases became more anonymous. A great deal of pressure was applied to the officers who directly administered relief, namely the Master and the overseers, and at times the machinery of administration creaked, but it is perhaps a measure of success that it did not entirely break down. By 1834 clear anomalies existed in the system, but unfortunately the Poor Law Amendment Act did not provide a viable alternative. Thus the old system continued with some alterations, and although there was widespread dissatisfaction with the granting of relief as it existed in Leeds, there was also a civic pride that the township dealt with its own problems without external help, and did so in what it believed was an economic manner.

Having examined the basic mechanics of how relief was granted, it is necessary to see what provisions the Committee made for the inmates. It is also important to discover what intentions the Committee

had, and how far results bore out its expectations. Immediate practical solutions to problems were a dominant feature in the treatment of the poor, and it is this aspect which Mark Blaug emphasised when describing the Old Poor Law as a "welfare state in miniature".²¹ There exist numerous examples in mid-eighteenth-century Leeds of instances to support this view. The blind were customarily taught to play the violin, presumably to improve their abilities at begging. Equipment was lent to enable paupers to provide for themselves, usually after a responsible third party had vouched for the safe return of the equipment involved. The Vestry demanded an enquiry and explanation after it was discovered that certain inmates were being instructed in the selling of almanacs on market days. Other incidents show the Committee attempting to find odd jobs for inmates, and fulfilling the role of rudimentary labour exchange. The Committee also gave its verdict on the fitness of inmates to work on the highways. The problem of scald-head, or ring-worm, was a recurrent one, and cases from outside the Workhouse were treated there. One person was given the responsibility for handling the cases, but the appointment was on the basis of "no cure, no pay" which, while saving unnecessary expenditure, also encouraged the use of some dubious methods. The nursing out of young children, the apprenticing of older ones, and the work of the apothecaries are other examples of the welfare provision of the Workhouse.

The Inmates: (a) Categories, Numbers and Standard of Living

It is very difficult, owing to the fragmentary nature of much of the material, to build an accurate picture of exactly who the inmates of the Workhouse were. Fortunately, however, a detailed record does exist for the year 1755.²² In July 1754 the Workhouse sheltered 22 men, 41 women and 22 children. By January 1755 with the advent of colder weather the numbers had risen to 43 men, 60 women and 53 children. Of these 103 adults, 17 died during the course of 1755, and 32 were recorded as having been discharged. It is significant that the average age of the men was slightly under 60 years, whereas that of the women was considerably lower. This was due to the high percentage of women in the 20 to 30 age-group who entered the Workhouse during the last stages of pregnancy, or were deserted by their husbands, especially when men were being recruited as soldiers. Of the 53 children, four died during the subsequent year, and only seven were apprenticed.

²¹ See M. Blaug, "The Poor Law Report Re-examined", *Journal of Economic History*, XXIV (1964).

²² L.C.A. LO/RB Serial List of Inmates.

This suggests that not only were a number of the children very young, but that the Committee had encountered considerable difficulty in finding suitable masters to whom to apprentice the children. By the end of June the number of men in the Workhouse had declined from 43 to 24, but it had risen again to 32 by November. The respective figures for women are 60, 46 and 53, but the trend is not maintained in the case of children, for whom the figures are 56, 36 and 35. This is possibly explained by the core of perpetual inmates in the adult categories, namely the aged. The increasing number of inmates during the winter reflected not only the fact that harsher weather forced some people to seek warmth and shelter, but also that employment possibilities diminished, especially in the agriculture-based out-townships. Also those who went "on the tramp" during the summer months were forced inside later in the year.

However, although there were marked seasonal variations in the number of Workhouse inmates, and certain years were characterised by outbreaks of disease, the problem of poverty at this time was essentially a static one. There were no large increases in the population of the township, which in 1775 stood at a little over 17,000 persons. Leeds and its out-townships did encourage workers from other areas, but these were not mass movements on the scale of the Irish influx in the nineteenth century. In addition, Leeds at this time was not dependent on textiles, and the local economy was relatively free from structural and cyclical unemployment. The major reasons for poverty were sickness, low wages or old age. The Workhouse was able to establish a place for itself in the alleviation of poverty, a work in which it was assisted by other charitable institutions.

In times of economic recession and especially when sickness was rife, the prime concern for the Workhouse was that of keeping services going rather than of widening the scope of provisions, and more than ever it was the practice to offer admission only to the most needy of cases. Paradoxically, perhaps, it was the case that the more hardship existed in the town, the more selective the Committee was in choosing whom to assist. It appears that the Workhouse was able to function in "normal" times, but in a crisis its resources were stretched too far to enable it to alleviate the distress in any effective manner. The inability of the institution to operate in any but the peripheral areas of poverty, and its helplessness in the face of mass distress were factors which grew with time.

When prosperity or comparative prosperity returned, the Committee usually returned to its old ways of granting liberal provision to those individuals believed worthy of it. This was certainly the case in

the years following the distress of 1757 when the administration was beset by the additional problem posed by the recruiting efforts of the militia. The militia recruited able-bodied men for the most part, and this took away the breadwinner of a family, in some cases leaving wives and children without sufficient means of supporting themselves. A Leeds newspaper believed that the whole West Riding Militia consisted of 1,240 men in 1759,²³ and two years later recruiting still continued.

There exists conflicting evidence as to whether the Committee was at times operating an elementary "workhouse test" in the 1760s, for although some paupers were refused relief unless they entered the House, outdoor relief was still granted in a majority of cases. It is probably accurate to say that compulsory entry was only insisted upon in "difficult" cases where hostility was encountered by the officials. During the early 1760s rumours were rife about maladministration of the Workhouse. In part these were inspired by hostility arising from the death of Robert Fagg, *alias* Thomas Hardman, who, it was alleged, died as the result of neglect on the part of Workhouse officials. Various rumours were circulated in the press, but the Vestry was more disquieted by the suggestion that outdoor relief was considered over-generous by some of the recipients.

A marked feature in these years was the need for some of the financial burden to be borne by other institutions in order to allow the Workhouse to continue its traditional forms of relief. Thus in the bad weather of 1763 a public subscription raised £3,000, which was spent on corn for distribution to the poor. Individual gifts were also important, such as the twenty guineas donated by Sir James Ibbetson, bart. However, the help which the Workhouse received from the wealthier sections of the town was not given without certain conditions attached. The "work" aspect of the Workhouse was again emphasised, and a stricter internal discipline was placed on the inmates. The work insisted upon was invariably spinning, tending animals or, for some of the women, work in the kitchen, but there was a certain pride underlying the record kept of how much money had been earned in this manner: "Upon viewing the account of labour in the House exclusive of what had been done for the House, there had been earned and received in cash this one year £69 15s. 5d."²⁴ Nevertheless the Committee was not motivated solely by profit considerations for it still allowed shelter to some "until the weather is

²³ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 18 Sept. 1759.

²⁴ See S. T. Anning, *The General Infirmary at Leeds* (1963), ch. 1.

better".²⁵ The conditions imposed on the Committee in return for municipal financial aid came to assume even greater importance with the passing of time.

The standard of food provided in the Workhouse is almost impossible to comment upon. Although the Committee did produce a basic diet sheet, there is no way of assessing whether it was adhered to. Also, there are no criteria for judging the quality of food or its nutritional content. If the diet sheet was adhered to, then the Workhouse food compared favourably with the fare offered by the Leeds Infirmary.²⁶ The Committee made dietary concessions to the sick, and allowed the old men the luxury of additional beer and a small allowance of tobacco. When the Workhouse was full, the milk porridge was at times replaced by water gruel, but how many other economies of this sort were made is not recorded. There were no scandals surrounding the food of the Workhouse, and the Committee itself felt that the provision was generous. Unfortunately it is not possible to judge whether this confidence was justified.

The major themes which emerged in the period until 1775 were the complexity of roles which the Committee was expected to undertake, the severity of the orders relating to settlement and bastardy laws, and the intrusion of the town in the affairs of the Workhouse. In order to uphold the settlement laws, the Committee was put to great expense, and also had to overcome the poor standard of communications, for in the space of a few weeks it was necessary to contact places as far apart as Halifax, Tadcaster and Worksop. The town intervened most noticeably on the occasion of the Workhouse's subscribing twelve guineas a year to the newly-established General Infirmary. This was objected to both as an improper use of money, and as being unfair to other subscribers to the Infirmary, as the extra patients from the Workhouse would take up much-needed space and resources. It was an important break-through for the Workhouse that eventually the Town Recorder decided that the subscription was in order. Nevertheless, the Committee had realised that its ability to treat poverty could be severely curtailed by the reactions of public opinion.

(b) Regulations

Surprisingly perhaps, it was not until 1771 that official rules were printed for the administration of the Workhouse. Some official directives from the Vestry and some internal regulations had existed prior to this, but it was felt that there was a need for a codified set of

²⁵ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M5, 2 May 1764.

²⁶ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M5, 11 Apr. 1764.

regulations. The interest which the general public had shown in Workhouse matters was probably a determining factor in this decision. The majority of the forty-three rules merely made official what had already become standard practice, but some reflected the Committee's desire to display its objection to luxury or unnecessary spending. The churchwardens and overseers were empowered to take the goods and effects of those who entered the Workhouse and dispose of them for the benefit of all. Persons who neglected to enter the Workhouse after being ordered to do so were not to receive any pay or relief, and no deceased pauper outside the Workhouse was entitled to a coffin unless the Committee expressly ordered otherwise. Responsibility for finding suitable masters to whom children were to be apprenticed was given to the churchwardens and overseers. Only one rule states the overall aims and hopes for the inmates, and this is quoted in full as it displays a curious optimism and also reveals an interesting attempt to impose discipline:

That the persons in the House endeavour to preserve Peace, good order and Unity therein, that they look upon themselves as one Family, and to prevent disputes which may arise from telling lies, the Offender shall by Order of the Master, be set and stand upon a stool in the Dining-Room during Dinner-time, with a Paper fixed on his or her Breast, whereupon shall be written, *Infamous Liar*, and also shall lose that meal.²⁷

It is conjecture whether this was intended as a definite instruction or was merely to appease public opinion. However, the moralistic tone was echoed in other orders of the Committee at this time.

A nineteenth-century commentator on the Poor Laws stated that "Workhouses alone cannot extinguish pauperism or remove many of its causes",²⁸ and this had quickly become evident in Leeds where, by the end of this period, private charity was becoming an important prop for the system. Pashley also felt that the "purchase of workhouses enabled the parochial administration of the day to apply a reasonable test of destitution and to limit their relief to worthier objects".²⁹ The Leeds Committee certainly exercised some care in choosing its inmates, and was under public pressure to give relief only to "real objects of charity". Yet in the long term it was obliged to give relief to any who had no source of support, and although the Workhouse could be used at times as a deterrent, it was more often seen as a last resort

²⁷ R. Pashley, *Pauperism and Poor Laws* (1852), 246.

²⁸ Leeds City Reference Library L.339.16L517. Rules and Orders for Relieving and Employment for the Poor of the Township of Leeds and For the Government of the Workhouse There. 1771.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

for the totally destitute. The Leeds experience supports the view that the "Old Poor Law was inconsistent" in the sense that there was no consistent general policy, but that "it was also profoundly adaptable".³⁰

In general, the period from 1726 to 1775 saw a pattern established in the institutional treatment of the poor which, although failing to solve root causes of poverty, nevertheless provided practical aid to many. If the Workhouse became an asylum for "a mixed population of the impotent and the vicious and [unfortunately] children",³¹ this was because these were the very categories of people which the institution had been designed to aid. The Workhouse was effective in the peripheral areas of poverty not only through conscious decision but also because its limited resources demanded that its functions necessarily had to be limited.

Unfortunately in the period from 1776 to 1834 there exists no continuous record of the activities of the Committee, which forces the emphasis to be placed on more general themes. The amount of money expended for the relief of the poor in Leeds rose from £3,693 in 1775-6 to £4,397 in 1785 and again to £19,274 in 1802-3.³² However, the last two decades of the eighteenth century were a time of expansion and optimism for Leeds, and the increases in poor relief must be seen in the light of a rapidly-increasing population. The local press was full of buoyant pride in the wealth of the town, and the following quotation is typical of many which appeared at the time: "Such is the increase in the trade and inhabitants of this populous town, that there have been in the past, and will be erected in the present year near four hundred dwelling-houses".³³ The rapid urbanisation experienced by Leeds at this time was to provide the Workhouse with new areas of responsibility.

Apprenticeship

One existing area of responsibility which assumed greater importance for the Committee in the period under review was apprenticeship. The apprenticing of young boys and girls to respectable trades had been part of the Committee's work from the outset. It was desirable in that those successfully apprenticed became the

³⁰ J. D. Marshall, *The Old Poor Law 1795-1834* (1968), 11.

³¹ J. R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism* (1969), 16.

³² J. Marshall, *A Digest of All the Accounts relating to the Population, Productions, Revenues, Financial Operations, Manufactures etc. of Great Britain and Ireland* (1833), 41.

³³ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 27 Mar. 1787.

financial responsibility of their employers and so reduced expenditure on poor relief. Also, it was realised that those who did not become established in a profession at a young age were liable to be a burden on the poor rate at a later age. In the 1750s and 1760s some tradesmen had avoided the responsibility of taking apprentices by successfully pleading ill-health or that they already had an exceptionally large family. The custom arose thereafter that a payment of £10 exempted an employer from taking an apprentice. Initially, the Committee saw this payment as a useful device which ensured that most of the small employers would find it more to their advantage to accept an apprentice rather than pay a lump sum. After taking legal advice, however, the Committee was forced to accept the interpretation that the £10 gave exemption from the taking of all apprentices and not just the one youth in question at the time. On the other hand, as the practice grew, the Committee found it a very attractive way in which to collect additional revenue. Nonetheless, the problem of finding suitable masters for the children not only remained but increased over the years,³⁴ as did also the number of employers who chose to buy exemption.³⁵

The reasons for the dramatic increase in the number of employers paying to be absolved from responsibility are hard to determine. In part it must have been the case that some employers could not afford to employ an apprentice because there was either not sufficient living accommodation or sufficient work. This would have been especially true of the newer establishments where another worker would have caused existing employees to see a threat to their job and pay, and also would have been an unnecessary additional expense. Equally some of the larger employers may have seen the £10 as a form of gift, especially after the custom had become so well-established.

From such records as have remained for the period after 1800 it is possible to gain some insight into the everyday difficulties encountered in apprenticing workhouse children. The employers in general demanded that the children be fit and healthy and were not slow to complain if this were not the case. Some of the children were apprenticed to employers outside Leeds, and in 1805 a deputation went to visit nine such children at Mr. Merryweather's factory in Otley. The deputation paid a surprise visit and was delighted to find the "factory in order and the bedding especially well aired and of good material".³⁶ The children were given a one-hour break at dinner, and

³⁴ The policies of the Committee are drawn from L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6 except where footnotes denote an alternative source.

³⁵ This increase is tabulated in Appendix I.

³⁶ L.C.A. LO/Q2 Query Book of the Master, 28 Aug. 1805.

finished work at seven o'clock. They attended church on Sunday, and in the evening were read to by their employer. The older boys earned 22s. 6d. a week and the younger ones 7s. To complete this almost idyllic picture, the deputation found that the clothing of the boys and girls and the food which they were given were both highly praiseworthy. That this establishment was not typical can be seen from the concluding remarks of the deputation, which by inference throw a great deal of light on the situation in Leeds. The three churchwardens, two overseers and one trustee were

unanimous of opinion that by placing them under the care of Mr. Merryweather it would be doing them a greater kindness than placing them with individuals in this township who too frequently neither pay attention to their morals or their future prospect in life.

We do not wish to infer from this that all children whom the township of Leeds may have to put out should be placed in the foregoing or the like establishment, but we wish to recommend it as a valuable seminary (if such we may be allowed to call it) for the placing of those children that cannot eligibly be disposed of within the Township.³⁷

Apprenticeship problems were a constant factor in the life of the Workhouse, but they assumed even greater importance after the financial affairs of the Committee had been thrown into confusion by embezzlement in 1817. John Squires was accused and subsequently found guilty on five separate charges of embezzlement from the Workhouse while serving as its Treasurer. The trial was lengthy, but not essentially because of doubt as to Squires's guilt but from confusion as to whether the Workhouse Board was a recognised body in the eyes of the law. Eventually the overseers alone were regarded as Squires's employers. The freedom which Squires had been granted to conduct the financial affairs of the Committee had been considerable, and grave doubts were cast on the competence of the entire Workhouse Committee when the scale of the embezzlements was revealed and the length of time over which they had occurred. In the following year, the Accountant was requested to keep "an alphabetical account of all persons who have either been Hired or Apprenticed in the Town, who by reason of their father living under Certificate or otherwise have not gained a Settlement".³⁸ This was an attempt by the Committee to recoup some of the money which had been spent on apprenticeships, by charging other areas which had legal settlement of the people involved. Also, an accurate record could be made public and thus help to enlighten the township about the size of the problem. Soon after this,

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 24 Mar. 1819.

the price for refusing an apprentice was increased, but this proved unsuccessful in solving the apprenticeship problem, although it may well have added to the Committee's income.

The Committee continued to seek solutions such as returning the exemptions fines if an employer at a later date were willing to take an apprentice. Despite the size of the problem the Committee was not however willing to place its charges in every trade or profession. Apprenticeships were not made to owners of public houses, for example, because of the possibility of the younger people being morally corrupted, but no reason was given for ministers of religion being similarly excluded. Apprentices were still sent some distance from Leeds, and in 1821 a report was made on three who were housed at Oldham; this led to a declaration that annual visits be paid to all those apprenticed outside Leeds. The need to send apprentices so far afield was clearly felt by the Committee to mean that some sectors of the township were avoiding responsibilities. In 1828 the Committee attempted to rectify this situation by ruling that all householders should take at least one apprentice. This ruling in fact attempted to throw the net even wider, but the scheme was not successful, and the following report from the *Leeds Intelligencer* aptly displays the cynicism with which the scheme was greeted in the town:

Our local legislators have (in their wisdom) enacted that all householders within the township shall either take a parish apprentice once in their lives or forfeit 10 pounds towards the annual necessities (including the feeding of the authorities) of the pauper establishment. By a "liberal" construction of this rule they also adjudge that each of the partners (though non-resident) of every firm in the town is deemed and taken to be resident for all the objects of this law: by which, contrary to the maxim of Sir Boyle Roche, it appears that other individuals (besides birds) may be in two places at once. Hence the Governor and all the Directors of the celebrated 'Old Lady' are threatened with notice of their liability either to an apprentice from the Leeds Workhouse, or a penalty of the above amount.³⁹

In March 1823 a member of the Committee, Mr. Green, and the Workhouse Master, Mr. Littlewood, visited Oldham to report on the apprentices there and gave a very full report of their findings. This report is worth examining in detail as it shows the wide disparity in the standard of employers and also in the conditions under which the apprentices lived. Green and Littlewood found that Harriet Woodhouse "do like and be liked"⁴⁰ by her master and mistress. She was working in a factory for a wage of 6s. 6d. per week. Two more masters were visited: one was found satisfactory while the other was

³⁹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 14 Feb. 1828.

⁴⁰ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 19 Mar. 1823.

excellent. The next person visited was John Wolfenden, and here it was found unfortunate "that this man should have two apprentices dead of a decline in so short a time, the impression in our minds is that the place they work in is much against them, it being a cold damp cellar without fire in the Winter".⁴¹ The visit continued, and three more employers were found satisfactory, whilst in the case of "Wormald who has Selina Edwards, who is working at a factory for 6s. per week, she looks and likes well".⁴² The deputation had mixed feelings here, however, for another apprentice had run away seven weeks previously and had not been heard of since. The next visit was unrewarding as the apprentice in this case had also run away. Enquiries were then made about Thomas Leas who had absconded after a warrant had been issued against him for mistreating apprentices. Information about Leas was not forthcoming, although one of his apprentices was believed dead and the other to have run away. At the conclusion of the visit the deputation made a further request that annual visits be paid to Oldham.

The system of apprenticing children left much to be desired throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century, as Matthew Johnson testified in 1838. He endorsed the statement that apprentices were "frequently sent to persons just entering upon business, and by whom the payment of the sum of £10 would be felt to be oppressive".⁴³ Johnson was also of the opinion that "the system of bringing up children in the house is such as not to create in them habits of industry and subordination and order",⁴⁴ and that this resulted in frequent complaints about the apprentices, usually ending with the Committee's being obliged to take the children back into the Workhouse. John Drumelzier Tweedy, a Poor Law Commissioner, also spotlighted a prime weakness of the apprenticeship system: "The power of binding parish apprentices, upon an unwilling rate-payer, is very capriciously exercised, and is, in many places the ground of just complaint. In many towns it is made a means of raising considerable sums annually, in the shape of fines for refusing to take apprentices".⁴⁵

Indeed in 1821 the amount received for fines in Leeds was £1,010, although by 1832 the figure had fallen to £530. Thus, as the Webbs remarked, a boy could earn between £30 and £500 for the parish

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ S.C. on the Poor Law Amendment Act (P.P. 1837-8, XVIII).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (P.P. 1834, XXVIII)

Appendix A, Part 1, No. 20.

before a master could be found for him.⁴⁶ This could also mean that a boy was as old as 18 before he was successfully apprenticed, although this was the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, Tweedy was not alone in advocating legislative sanctions to cover this aspect of the system. In Leeds the “careers” of George Orange over a two-year period and Joseph Richardson over a shorter period show how a boy could be sent from one master to another without obtaining a settled position.⁴⁷ Orange met with more potential masters than most, but other children had similar experiences, and the majority were refused by at least four or five potential employers. Even when apprenticed many of the children continued to be a problem to the Workhouse Committee. The Committee at the end of this period recorded its own reflections on its failure to produce a workable apprenticeship system: “that of those who are bound as Apprentice probably a majority, from various circumstances connected with their own misconduct, abandon such services before the legal period of their Apprenticeship expires”.⁴⁸

The Committee had realised that workhouse conditions did not produce the behaviour in its young inmates which would endear them to potential employers, and attempts were made to rectify this. In 1819 a deputation visited New Lanark to gain first-hand knowledge of Robert Owen’s methods, and although reports were very favourable, no action was taken. The expense involved in providing better facilities for children was sufficient to discourage any further efforts until the 1840s when plans for an Industrial School were put in hand. Nevertheless in 1820 the Committee did investigate ways in which the existing facilities could be better adapted. The result of this was that one room was to be set aside for the boys and another for the girls. The girls were to learn to read and write from eight o’clock in the morning until midday, and would then learn to knit and sew from half-past-one until six o’clock. Two of the senior girls were to work in rotation in the kitchen under the supervision of the Mistress, in order to become accustomed to domestic service. The boys were to be employed in the cardroom in the morning, and were to learn to read and write in the afternoon.

Pressures on the Old Poor Law

If there was one year that saw a marked turning-point in the affairs of the Workhouse it was 1826. From the 1780s until the 1820s the

⁴⁶ S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government*, Vol. 7: *English Poor Law History*, part 1, *The Old Poor Law* (1927, reprinted 1963), 209.

⁴⁷ The apprenticeships entered into by these two boys are detailed in Appendix II.

⁴⁸ P.R.O. Poor Law Commission for England and Wales, Files of Correspondence (MH 12/15224).

number of inmates had stayed consistently between 130 and 160, but after 1826 the numbers rose rapidly until 1833 when the figure was 252. In part this can be explained by the increase in the population of Leeds township and also, as will be examined later, by the growth of cyclical unemployment. Also, the diet sheet of the Workhouse was changed at this time and became more varied. In providing meat three times a week, the Committee was possibly granting a standard of comfort beyond the means of some independent labourers, a point which did not go unnoticed by J. D. Tweedy, the Poor Law Commissioner, in 1834.

The Poor Law Report of 1834 provides a summary of how the Committee in Leeds treated the various categories of paupers during the 1820s, and provides evidence of how practices had come into being because of the shortcomings of the traditional systems. The population of Leeds had increased from over 30,000 in 1801 to over 71,000 in 1831, and this increase alone had forced the Committee to standardise certain procedures. Lodgings were provided for vagrants, and in some instances paupers, when the Workhouse was full, but the Committee was reluctant to provide housing for those seeking employment in the area, as had once been the case. Relief in the form of paying rents was practised, although the Committee felt that this was a bad system, but declared in its defence that the amount of money expended in this way was so small that it had no effect on the competitive market for rented property. "Lunatics" were sent to the pauper asylum at Wakefield, and the Committee no longer attempted to provide treatment or care in the Workhouse. The majority of "idiots" were also sent to Wakefield, although the Committee never clarified the distinction between "idiots" and "lunatics". By the mid-1820s a uniform system of payment to those on outdoor relief had emerged. The allowance to a man or woman of sixty-six was 3s., whilst those who were aged between fifty-four and sixty-five were granted 2s. a week. If the people concerned had some means of support other than aid from the Committee, then the payments could be as low as 1s. 6d., but even in cases of extreme distress the payments never exceeded 3s. 6d. The Committee recommended that paupers should apply to their relatives for help, but recourse was rarely made to the law, as had been the case in the eighteenth century, because of the cost involved. Children who had been deserted by their parents were taken into the Workhouse as a matter of course, but it was recognised that some fathers had deserted their children in the certain knowledge that they would be cared for by the town. Again, the cost of legal action prevented the Committee from acting as it had previously done. Only in giving relief to single,

able-bodied men did the Committee have a flexible system whereby the amount of relief was determined by the man's character. Although a certain uniformity in practice was inevitable, nevertheless, the scale of poverty also required the Committee to deal with a large number of cases in a limited time, and this resulted in the majority of the Committee's decisions being concerned with exceptional cases, whilst the bulk of the work relating to ordinary cases was dealt with in a routine manner.

Whilst the Committee was standardising its procedures, it was also true that the township saw itself as being out of line with most of the rest of the country. This view rested on the belief that by the 1820s Leeds had a complex economy: it had a developed industrial sector, although it was still very reliant on the agricultural out-townships. The poverty of the eighteenth century was essentially static in character in that those in need of aid were the young, the aged and those mentally or physically incapable of work. Local economic conditions had no direct effect on the condition of these groups and indeed the weather was perhaps the most important factor in determining whether the aged sought refuge in the Workhouse. By 1826 the poverty problem had become dynamic, and the township had grown used to periodic bouts of acute unemployment. This scale of unemployment removed any stigma attached to being out of work and having to receive institutional aid. The Leeds newspapers had no doubt that the wealth of the town lay in the woollen industry, and that its fortunes fluctuated according to movements in that industry. Thus, a report on the state of the woollen industry usually included comments on the level of employment, as for example, "There is some improvement in the woollen trade within the last month, but by no means what it ought to be at this season. It is quite deplorable to see the number of 'masterless men' who are walking about the streets, and must be still more lamentable to see their poor families".⁴⁹

Indeed, in April 1832 there were an estimated 700 woollen cloth workers unemployed in the Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck areas. Leeds attracted many workers from outside areas and in times of recession these people added to the financial burden of the township. From early December 1831 to mid-March 1832 there were 2,548 Leeds families receiving assistance, compared to 2,685 families from other areas.⁵⁰ However, although the woollen industry was the largest single employer, its dominance declined over the years, and there was a continuous fragmentation of existing trades and the advent of new ones.

⁴⁹ *Leeds Mercury*, 31 Mar. 1832.

⁵⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 14 Apr. 1832.

In Edward Baines's *Directory* for 1834 there are 307 local trades recorded.⁵¹ The large increase in the "occupied" population necessarily increased the potential scale of unemployment, and the greater diversity of occupations brought with it frictional unemployment. The increased complexity of the occupational structure in the early decades of the nineteenth century also meant that a decline in one sector could have repercussions on others. Although by 1841 Leeds was becoming increasingly industrialised and growing rapidly, only one out of every four occupied people worked in a factory. By the 1830s the Leeds economy was subject to seasonal, structural and frictional unemployment which, combined with a rising population, ensured increased work for an already overcrowded Workhouse. The changed economic situation brought changed attitudes.

Unfortunately detailed records of the weekly dealings of the Committee remain only for the period 1818 to 1824, and while there is nothing to suggest that these are in any way atypical of the years preceding and succeeding them, their existence does focus attention on these particular years. In 1819 the Committee was sufficiently concerned with the problems of unemployment to establish a sub-committee to review the causes of prevailing pauperism and specifically to investigate "whether the existing evil be of a complexion merely temporary and may be supposed soon to right itself: and whether it may not be provident (in case the causes that induce the evil be permanent) to enquire into the best means of finding some permanent productive source of labour for the unemployed poor".⁵²

The Committee did not consider the Workhouse to be a solution when unemployment rose above the norm. Its interest in this area stemmed more from the belief that it was not merely the controlling body of the Workhouse and that it should be more fully involved in the affairs of the township. It was the Committee which petitioned Parliament twice in 1818 on the issues of settlement and changes in rating procedure. In 1820 the Committee combined forces with the Vagrant Office over the issue of prostitution. In December of that year it was noticed that there had been an increase in the number of prostitutes. The Committee was of the opinion that "One cause of this increasing evil appears . . . to arise from the active measures enforced against common prostitutes at York, Hull etc., whereby they are driven from these places and take shelter in Leeds".⁵³ At the instigation of the

⁵¹ Quoted in W. G. Rimmer, "The Industrial Profile of Leeds 1740-1840", *Thoresby Society Publications*, L (1968), 130-57.

⁵² L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 7 July 1819.

⁵³ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 13 Dec. 1820.

Committee, other institutions were enlisted to combat this "evil" and also to take action on two other matters: the raising of substitutes for those balloted in the militia, and the attempt to obtain an Act of Parliament to render the owners of cottages liable to pay the poor-rate on such property. The activities of the Committee ranged widely during the early 1820s, and included some pursued by its members in their individual professional capacities.

A specific hindrance to the work of the Committee in the 1820s was the aftermath of the John Squires embezzlement case of 1817. This unfortunate incident brought immediate results in the Committee's efforts to remove all possible areas of misappropriation of funds. In furtherance of this policy, a list of names of all outdoor poor was to be printed quarterly and distributed to the principal householders of the town "for the purpose of attaining such information as may detect imposition and assist the Committee in discharging the duties of their office".⁵⁴ However, despite resolutions to withhold payments from those who were undeserving in the eyes of the Committee, outdoor relief continued to be on a generous scale to those who were considered "objects of charity". Certain families were still offered the choice either of receiving outdoor relief or entering the Workhouse, whilst at least one family received £10 to enable them to go to Rotterdam to work. The declared policies of restricting payments and of economising were often not strictly adhered to, and were possibly aimed at appeasing public opinion. Confidence in the Committee had clearly been reduced after the Squires affair, and the surest way to regain confidence was to reduce expenditure.

This was very much the case after the internal investigation of the Workhouse in 1822 when the Committee again consciously attempted to economise. The decision was taken not only after a Vestry meeting had drawn attention to excesses in expenditure, but also at a time when both Leeds newspapers had pointedly remarked upon the need for economy by public institutions. The Committee had started the year with a new set of rules and regulations and an investigation into perquisites received by employees. Cuts in expenditure took the form of reductions in food or less generous granting of specific relief, and the following two orders are typical examples: "the usual allowance of bread be cut into half on meat days for children"⁵⁵ and "the weekly pay of all bastard cases should be reduced to 1s."⁵⁶ The amount of beer given to the inmates was also reduced, although this was linked to

⁵⁴ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 7 Jan. 1818.

⁵⁵ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 29 May 1822.

⁵⁶ L.C.A. Workhouse Minutes LO/M6, 5 June 1822.

an attempt to end violent behaviour in the Workhouse. The general expenditure on food and clothing was regularly scrutinised and a less liberal attitude applied to the granting of coffins. The latter economy had been a recurring feature of the Committee's policy dating back to the opening of the building in 1726. In what were judged to be normal times the Committee usually allowed those who had died in the Workhouse to be buried in coffins. At times this provision was extended to those on outdoor relief, although periodically coffins were not permitted. A somewhat bizarre compromise was occasionally reached whereby two or more bodies were interred in one coffin. The Committee also went to considerable lengths to determine the size and quality of coffins, and spent more time (as measured by the number of orders made) on this subject than on the question of provisions, which suggests that the whole issue had an emotional content.

Although there is evidence about the ways in which the Committee made reductions in expenditure, there is less material relating to the effects this had on day-to-day events in the Workhouse administration. From 1827 until 1836 there is a record of the activities of an assistant overseer which in part makes up for this omission. It is a journal divided into two halves, the left-hand side of the page consisting of orders given to assistant overseers and the right-hand side noting the action taken. The vast majority of the orders refer to matters of settlement or the taking of legal action to ensure that families were not neglected by the head of the family. A typical entry for a day in September 1827 records that two warrants were taken out against fathers for neglect of family, one summons was taken out against a resident of the House of Correction for failing to maintain his grandchildren, and two enquiries were initiated into the place of settlement of two persons from Halifax and Thornton. This pattern was repeated until 1836, although frequently the taking out of a warrant was done more as a threat, and further action was rarely required. The everyday problems of the assistant overseer, not the least of which were the complexities of the laws of settlement, were concerned primarily with reducing the amount of outdoor relief. By adhering to a strict policy of compelling heads of household to support their families, and of only giving relief to those who had authentic settlement in Leeds, the Committee was able to appease public opinion by keeping its outgoings low and only giving relief to "real objects of charity".

In general however it must be said that the Workhouse population in the 1820s was increasing, and that the building was not altogether suitable for its purpose. With the recommendations that adults and

children should be housed separately, and that sick rooms should be clearly segregated from the rest, more pressure was put on the Committee for the use of limited space and financial resources. It was only by economising on outdoor relief that the workhouse system could be preserved. A further pressure came from the fact that at frequent intervals the town's attention rested on the Committee's activities because of the efforts either of the Vestry or of the press, and adverse publicity had to be avoided. Thus the Committee was forced to improvise and extemporise in order to make a century-old building and system of administration serve the purposes which were demanded of them by more recent developments.

Conclusion

It will have been noticed that the foregoing account of activities in the Workhouse is predominantly chronological. This is necessary in order to emphasise the difference between the eighteenth-century institution and the Workhouse as it was on the eve of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. The crucial question remains how the Workhouse changed from the state in which Eden found it at the end of the eighteenth century, "The dormitories and other departments are kept with great neatness, and the Poor are well dressed, clean and orderly",⁵⁷ to its condition in the 1830s when it was described as being "discreditable to a civilised society".⁵⁸ It is argued here that this change can largely be explained by changing economic conditions and the social reactions which were engendered. Until the close of the eighteenth century the Workhouse population consisted of the old, the sick and the very young. The overriding popular opinion was that these unfortunates deserved a certain measure of comfort and care. Discipline was necessary to ensure good behaviour and induce industrious habits in the young, but apart from periodic outbursts of complaint concerning excessive expenditure, the population of Leeds was content to let the Committee care for its less fortunate brethren. Even at the end of the eighteenth century, the Workhouse Committee dealt with only about four per cent of the town's population, including those on outdoor relief. Throughout the sixty years from the foundation of the Workhouse, attitudes towards setting the poor to work had softened, and welfare provisions gradually became more varied in scope.

The early years of the nineteenth century saw a reversal of these

⁵⁷ F. M. Eden, *op. cit.*, 360.

⁵⁸ Quoted in D. Roberts, "How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?" *History Journal*, VI (1963).

trends, a reversal which became more marked after the economic recessions of the 1820s. By this time a rapidly-increasing population and the advent of mass unemployment brought new ideas on treating poverty. Public donations were at the forefront of these new ideas, and additional institutions came into being. The Workhouse played a very minor role at this time, and the civic pride which Leeds felt at its ability to ride economic recessions without recourse to outside bodies such as national government was reflected in its support for the Anti-Poor Law Movement, which was far more than merely a hostile reaction to centralisation. However, the Workhouse, with its limited size and resources, could only play a small part at times of acute distress, and accordingly was given scant praise or support by the Leeds public. Indeed other charities only sought financial aid when the local economy was entering a downswing; the Workhouse sought help year in and year out. Accordingly at a time when the Workhouse saw its limited facilities being demanded by more and more people, it was receiving successively less support from the rest of the population. Whilst it became accepted that temporary unemployment was a permanent feature of the town, and no censure was passed on those who required financial aid for a limited period, increasing distrust and hostility were shown to Workhouse inmates who required aid for extended periods. Once more the idea that Workhouse inmates included many who wouldn't rather than couldn't work gained prominence. A popular idea of the workhouse population can be seen from a review of Miss Martineau's book, *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*. The *Leeds Mercury* praised the ways in which "her characters are still most faithfully drawn, and are the true representatives of extensive classes". Reference was then made to "the impudent, lying, revengeful and intolerably lazy inmates of the workhouse".⁵⁹ From the desire to set the poor to work prevalent in 1726, attitudes had become more benign and showed a greater wish to provide welfare provision for the destitute. By the 1830s there was once more a desire to distinguish between worthy objects of charity and the feckless, and in the thinking of the architects of the 1834 legislation, the workhouse was the ideal vehicle for testing the motives of those seeking relief. A correspondent to the *Leeds Intelligencer* summed up the desire of the Leeds public for "the separation of the deserving from the undeserving of those who have been driven to this last refuge, save one, of suffering humanity by unavoidable misfortune, from those whose pauperism is the deserved termination of a life of idleness and profligacy".⁶⁰ In the century after 1726, thinking

⁵⁹ *Leeds Mercury*, 1 June 1833.

⁶⁰ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 4 Aug. 1831.

on the expected functions of the Workhouse had almost come full circle.

In 1835, the Committee commenced its own internal investigation and gave an eloquent testimony on its own shortcomings, especially referring to the failures of the old Workhouse:

The want of proper classification, the almost unrestrained intercourse and the absence of suitable employment in the Workhouse: together with its liberal allowance of the best kinds of food have but too generally induced upon those whom circumstances have led to a temporary residence there, habits of idleness and improvidence: and in innumerable instances been the means of their eventually becoming, at no distant period, residents in that establishment.⁶¹

Nevertheless, although it was widely agreed that the old Workhouse was inadequate, even the harshest critic did not envisage Leeds being without a workhouse. Similarly, although the Committee was frequently criticised for overspending, it was never suggested that the Workhouse should be abolished. It was seen as a vital part of poor relief, even if a minor partner to other institutions so engaged, and especially to private charity.

Appendix I.

Apprenticeship 1730-1808

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Children Successfully Apprenticed</i>	<i>Number of Payments for Exemption</i>
1730-60	264	—
1761-70	287	27
1771-80	414	57
1781-90	498	102
1791-1800	334	305
1801-08	273	352

These figures are not complete owing to a small part of the records having been destroyed. The totals given are undervalued by between 3% and 5%. Nevertheless, this is a constant omission for all the years and does not affect the trend.

Source: L.C.A. LO/ARI List of Apprentices 1720-1808.

⁶¹ P.R.O. Poor Law Commission for England and Wales, Files of Correspondence (MH12/15224).

Appendix II.
The 'Careers' of George Orange and Joseph Richardson

George Orange

<i>Date</i>	<i>Employer's Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Orange's Age</i>
1818 1 Apr.	Matthew Balmforth	Goldsmith	10 yrs. 9 mos.
22 Apr.	Mr. Pomfret	China Manufacturer	10 yrs. 9 mos.
29 Apr.	John Spence	Malster	10 yrs. 9 mos.
20 May	Lewis Morgan	Builder	10 yrs. 10 mos.
17 June	William Blockley	Shear Maker	11 yrs. 1 mo.
24 June	Joseph Wilson	Joiner	11 yrs. 1 mo.
1 July	Samuel Pearson	Butcher	11 yrs. 1 mo.
23 Sept.	William Watson	Boat Builder	11 yrs. 4 mos.
14 Oct.	Mr. Taylor	Grocer	11 yrs. 4 mos.
18 Nov.	Mr. Jennings	Plasterer	11 yrs. 7 mos.
1819 6 Jan.	Mr. Young	Porter Dealer	11 yrs. 8 mos.
27 Jan.	Jonathan Lord	Joiner	11 yrs. 9 mos.
17 Feb.	Mr. Fodin	Attorney	11 yrs. 9 mos.
3 Mar.	Thomas Gossage	Gentleman	11 yrs. 10 mos.
5 May	Thomas Renton	Paper-hanging Manufacturer	12 yrs.
17 Nov.	John Heaton	Butcher	12 yrs. 7 mos.
24 Nov.	Mr. Clarke	Grocer	12 yrs. 7 mos.
1 Dec.	John Richardson	Surgeon	12 yrs. 7 mos.
29 Dec.	Mr. Harby	Surgeon	12 yrs. 8 mos.
1820 5 Jan.	Israel Dobson	Shoe Maker	12 yrs. 8 mos.
12 Jan.	Mr. Wilson	Merchant	12 yrs. 8 mos.
26 Jan.	Mr. Ramsden	Old Malt Mill	12 yrs. 9 mos.
9 Feb.	John Wainwright	Joiner	12 yrs. 9 mos.

Joseph Richardson

Richardson's Age

1818 25 Feb.	George Moore	Commission Agent	13 yrs. 5 mos.
15 Apr.	John Gipton	Attorney	13 yrs. 6 mos.
22 Apr.	George Brown	Brickmaker	13 yrs. 6 mos.
13 May	Thomas Crossland	Butcher	13 yrs. 6 mos.
3 June	Mr. Farrar	Mason	13 yrs. 7 mos.
10 June	Samuel Gilpin	Bricklayer	13 yrs. 8 mos.
17 June	William Faith	Victualler	13 yrs. 8 mos.
24 June	John Haigh	Hairdresser	13 yrs. 8 mos.
1 July	William Green	Victualler	13 yrs. 9 mos.
8 July	William Whitfield	Grocer	13 yrs. 9 mos.
15 July	Mr. Hewitt, Jr.	Grocer	13 yrs. 9 mos.
22 July	Carrick Blanchard	Plasterer	13 yrs. 9 mos.
29 July	John Boddy	Joiner	13 yrs. 10 mos.
12 Aug.	John Gott	Blacksmith	13 yrs. 10 mos.

THE ORIGINS OF GAS IN LEEDS: THE LEEDS GAS LIGHT COMPANY, 1817-35

by

A. LOCKWOOD, B.A.

Introduction

Coal gas was discovered some one hundred and fifty years before it was exploited commercially. The first practical application was by William Murdock, using gas to light his house and office in Redruth, Cornwall, in 1792. However, it is possibly to Frederick Albert Winsor that credit should be given for the idea of manufacturing gas at central works and supplying it by street mains to consumers.¹ The first gas company, the London Gas Light and Coke Company, was established in 1812. After 1820 oil gas companies began to be established, these being of relatively short duration, since their process of manufacture proved commercially unsound.

Opposition to the use of gas for lighting came from, amongst others, lamp oil interests, who claimed that this new source of light was a threat to the whaling industry. Advocates, on the other hand, claimed that well-lit streets were safer, and that it would prove at least one-third cheaper than oil lighting.

Most early gas companies faced problems, not least the fact that techniques of manufacture and distribution were crude. Improvements were sporadic, but, clearly, given that mains pipes were a significant initial cost and that maintenance of these contributed a major element of running costs, the choice of location was important. Technological bottlenecks were apparent. The earliest gas meter, invented by Samuel Clegg in 1815, was not widely adopted immediately; gas was generally sold on the basis of the size of burner employed and the hours of burning, a system open to abuse. Further problems included difficulty in obtaining competent gas engineers, especially, claims M. E. Falkus,² to construct the works. It has also been claimed that the supply of gas was considered a risky venture, because, if other companies were established in the same town, duplication of equip-

¹ For a discussion of the early gas industry see Dean Chandler and A. Douglas Lacey, *The Rise of the Gas Industry in Britain* (1949).

² M. E. Falkus, "The British Gas Industry before 1850", *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser. XX (1967), 505.

ment, interference with each others' mains and destructive price competition occurred.

Another aspect that will be considered is the nature of demand. For many years after its first commercial appearance gas was not generally considered for use in private dwellings. Falkus claims that this type of demand grew in the 1840s and became usual after 1850.³ In fact first consumers were often Commissioners for Lamps who, according to D. A. Chatterton, were anxious to delegate their function to competent suppliers of light.⁴

Falkus claims that there were three major periods in the early development of the gas industry, 1818-25, 1831-7 and 1842-6, and that these corresponded with upswings in British economic activity.⁵ He suggests that the reasons are the close links between gas company profits and business concerns, and the dependence of gas companies on industrial and bank credit. As regards timing he is correct as far as the Leeds Gas Light Company is concerned.

The starting point is 1817, when the first gas company was suggested by George Banks who was also involved in the South Market project around the same time. The finishing point is 1835, which marks the establishment of a second coal gas company.

Establishment, Organisation and Commercial Aspects

On 27 December 1817 a general meeting of subscribers was held for the purpose of forming a gas light company. There was to be a committee of twenty people for carrying the plan into effect (Table 1). They were to try to obtain an Act of Parliament. The Committee was able to call in portions of subscriptions when, and in any amount, they chose. The capital of £20,100 was divided into £100 ordinary shares, and no single person could hold more than five shares. Clearly there was no shortage of demand for shares.

At a committee meeting on 2 January 1818 John Hill was appointed chairman and various sub-committees were formed for examining certain aspects of the operation (Table 1). Shortly after this meeting an advertisement appeared in the *Leeds Intelligencer* for an engineer;⁶ applications were to be directed to Ralph Blakelock, the secretary. On 2 February M. Murray and J. Cawood were each asked to submit

³ M. E. Falkus, "The British Gas Industry before 1850", *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser. XX (1967), 495.

⁴ D. A. Chatterton, "State Control of Public Utilities in the Nineteenth Century: the London Gas Industry", *Business History*, XIV (1972), 167.

⁵ M. E. Falkus, *op. cit.*, 496.

⁶ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 5 Jan. 1818.

TABLE I.

Members of the original Committee and various Sub-Committees.

Committee

George Banks	a	b	
John Charlesworth	a	b	c
John Hill (Chairman)	b	c	
George Bischoff	d		
Jonathan Wilks	a	b	
William Beckett	a	b	
John Clapham	d		
William Oldham	d		
George Oakes	c		
George Rawson	c		
Richard Kemplay	d		
John Marshall	c		
John Hives	c		
Robert Lowett	e		
William Smith	e		
David Nell	e		
Joshua Garsed	c		
James Brook	d	e	
James Holdforth	c		
Joshua Dickinson	d	e	

The letters after the names indicate which of the following sub-committees each person was a member of:

a = sub-committee for laws

b = sub-committee for land

c = sub-committee for mechanics

d = sub-committee for rates

e = sub-committee for works.

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Committee Minutes 1817-44, 2 Jan. 1818.

a plan for building the works, and the first call of 10 per cent was made.

Approximately five weeks later it was resolved that the solicitors, Atkinson and Bolland, should buy a field situated in Meadow Lane. By this time both Murray's and Cawood's plans had been received.⁷ On 7 March the solicitors were instructed to secure, for all purposes, the use of the sewer that ran from the field by the brewery past the pottery to Low Bridge and emptied into the river. It is likely that the Committee were anticipating nuisance complaints against them. The same day Murray and Cawood were asked to submit estimates of their plans; it

⁷ Leeds City Archives Acc. 1191 (hereafter L.C.A. Gas), Committee Minutes (hereafter C.M.) 1817-44, 6 Mar. 1818.

appears the battle was between local concerns, and in this respect Leeds seemingly had sufficient skills.

By 13 March the plans of the Committee had been shaken by complaints from a prominent mill owner called Benyon about having the gas works so near his factory. Since his fears could not be alleviated they resolved to consider land near Marsh Lane at a cost of 2s. per yard. Three days later the Committee resolved to accept Murray's estimate,⁸ and he, as was usual for early gas companies, was to undertake all construction up to completion. Murray had viewed the land near Marsh Lane and considered it unsuitable, mainly because of its small size: however, seven days later he recommended that a plot of land in York Street was superior to the field in Meadow Lane.⁹ The land sub-committee was to buy this property from Dickins, acting for the late Richard Paley, for 2s. 3d. per yard. It is likely that the choice of location was influenced by distance from the town; it is certain that size was also a consideration. At this time the Committee entered a formal agreement with Fenton, Murray and Wood to construct the works in York Street for £8,000. Out of tenders received for pipes that from Darwin and Company of Elson Road Iron Works, Sheffield, was the lowest; the Gas Light Company was also receiving tenders for coal. The fact that they were not simply buying from the nearest and cheapest source was probably influenced by the desire for "correct" coal: that is, they desired coal, not simply to produce the greatest amount of gas, but to produce good quality coke as well, reflecting the most important by-product. On 29 February the Committee decided that the first pipes were to be 14 inches in diameter and three-quarters of an inch thick; the other pipes were to be reduced in thickness and diameter according to Murray's calculations. This indicates the fact that, in areas further from the works, pipes of lesser proportions were sufficient. The contract for pipes was given to Darwin and Company, to be delivered in the space of three months. The Gas Company received the benefit of a bulk discount on their purchase of pipes: 5 per cent on straight pipes at £9 per ton, and angle pipes at £12 per ton. On 6 April 1818 George Baulby was engaged as a manager at a salary of £140 per annum, and nineteen days later the second, third and fourth calls of 20 per cent each were made because of contracts entered into.¹⁰ By 5 May an agreement had been made between the Company and the engineers; the latter were to pay £100 for each week the work was not complete. However, six days later it

⁸ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 16 Mar. 1818.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 Mar. 1818.

¹⁰ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 25 Apr. 1818.

was reported that: "On Friday last the Leeds Gas Light Bill received Royal Assent. We are happy to hear that the arrangements for the works of the Gas Light Company are already considerably advanced, and that a great part of the town, it is expected, will be lighted by them in the ensuing winter".¹¹ Two days later the sub-committee for mechanics was requested to meet with the sub-committee for rates, to provide them with information on how much coal would be needed to produce 60,000 cubic feet of gas, the cost of lime for purifying, the number of men required for the works, their wages, the annual expense of retorts and the wear and tear of apparatus, and other costs.¹² The amount of gas produced daily between 3 July 1826 and 5 August 1831 varied between a low of 3,000 cubic feet and a high of 29,000 cubic feet.¹³ However, this may not be a typical period since the economy was probably in a slump. The daily production record between the two above dates shows clear seasonal fluctuations in the quantity of gas produced: for example 6,000 cubic feet was produced on Monday, 4 August 1828, which increased to 24,500 cubic feet by Monday, 12 January 1829, necessitated by the longer hours of darkness. From the information provided by the sub-committee for mechanics it was decided how much to charge for coke and tar and so develop a pricing policy. On 20 May 1818 the Committee decided to offer a fifteen-hole argand burner from dusk until nine o'clock for £3 per annum, a six-hole for £1 10s. and a three-hole cockspur¹⁴ for £1 10s. Two days later, they decided that Baulby was to begin on 4 June 1818,¹⁵ and since he was to superintend pipe-laying it would be reasonable to assume that progress so far was confined to the site. On 6 June Baulby was requested to make a plan of York Street, Kirkgate, Briggate, and Call Lane, showing the proposed lines of gas pipes and branch pipes for public houses, private houses, inns and others. This is significant in that since these plans refer to private houses there had, presumably, been requests for gas lighting from their owners well before 1840. By 13 June Fenton, Murray and Wood had received £2,500 and the Committee was evidently ensuring that pipes were correctly jointed, since they ordered a vessel in which to melt lead.

A major development occurred on 10 August when Reynolds and Hobson, two Commissioners for Lamps, called on the Committee to

¹¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 May 1818.

¹² L.C.A. Gas C.M., 13 May 1818.

¹³ L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Daily Record of Production 1826-31.

¹⁴ Cockspurs were so named because the flame resembled the spur of a game-cock, and argands after a process developed by a Swiss engineer.

¹⁵ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 22 May 1818.

invite a tender for the town's lamps. However, of the 1,200 lamps mentioned they could only light 300, and decided not to offer a tender that year. This demonstrates the correctness of Chatterton's claim that the Commissioners were anxious to delegate their function. Two days later the Committee decided to extend the range of burners offered, because the number of enquiries indicated a greater and more varied demand than they expected¹⁶ (see Table 2 for revised offer).

TABLE 2.

Scale of Charges per annum 19 August 1818 (£ s. d.).

<i>From dusk until</i>	<i>9 o'clock</i>			<i>10 o'clock</i>			<i>11 o'clock</i>			<i>12 o'clock</i>		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Argand 6 hole	1	10	0	2	0	0	2	10	0	3	0	0
9	2	0	0	2	14	0	3	7	0	4	0	0
12	2	10	0	3	6	0	4	2	0	4	18	0
15	3	0	0	4	0	0	5	0	0	6	0	0
18	4	0	0	5	6	0	6	10	0	7	16	0
24	4	10	0	6	0	0	7	10	0	9	0	0
Cockspur 1 jet	1	0	0	1	6	0	1	12	0	1	18	0
2	1	10	0	2	0	0	2	10	0	3	0	0
3	2	0	0	2	14	0	3	7	0	4	0	0
Roselights 3 jets	2	0	0	2	14	0	3	7	0	4	0	0
6	3	10	0	4	10	0	5	10	0	6	10	0
9	5	0	0	6	0	0	7	0	0	8	0	0
Fanlight 7 jets	4	10	0	6	0	0	7	10	0	9	0	0
Batwing	4	0	0	5	6	0	6	10	0	7	16	0

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Committee Minutes 1817-44, 19 Aug. 1818.

They also provided that special agreements might be reached for Sunday lighting and with those whose hours were uncertain. On 25 September the Committee heard an explanation of R. Phillips's dry lime purifier and recommended its use. Clearly the Committee wished to use such a purifier at the beginning of production although for legal reasons they, in fact, did not. This is surprising since it has been claimed that this invention was not widely adopted until after 1870.¹⁷ By 6 October it had been decided to extend the mains over the bridge to the junction of Meadow Lane and Water Lane, and along Hunslet Lane to George Banks's house, which is hardly surprising considering his role as initiator of the scheme. We also discover that production

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 Aug. 1818.

¹⁷ Dean Chandler and A. Douglas Lacey, *The Rise of the Gas Industry in Britain* (1949), 63.

was supposed to begin in November, and burners were ordered from Jones and Barker, with a quantity discount this time of 10 per cent. Further, since Houldsworth, acting for Phillips, had delayed so long in his offer of royalties regarding Phillips's purifier a different plan was adopted, presumably a wet lime purifier.¹⁸

By 7 December the Committee had received applications for lighting outside the normal period, a further indication of the extent of demand. It was clear by now that Fenton, Murray and Wood had not fulfilled their original contract, and pressure was applied. On 4 January 1819 J. B. Charlesworth, a Committee member, was to write to the Commissioner of Lamps to ask what he would allow for lamps lighted in the present season. Significance should be attached to the fact that the emphasis is on what he will offer, not what the Company considers a fair price. Three weeks later 40 tons of coal were ordered from Fenton and 40 tons from Marston Colliery;¹⁹ the Company was still seeking a satisfactory type of coal. At the same time Well Dale lime was ordered for purifying. Then, on 8 February it was reported that:

The gas lights were lighted in this town for the first time on Thursday evening last. Owing to the mixture of atmospheric with the gas in its passage through the pipes, the brilliance of the lights was considerably obscured and the public was much disappointed in their expectations. About 9 o'clock, however, they burnt with a much greater degree of brightness . . . the Leeds gas lights will equal those of any other town in the Kingdom.²⁰

A month later, as anticipated, there were complaints about water from the purifier going down the common drain,²¹ and on 19 March Baulby was sacked for drinking with the men! At a meeting of 5 April it was agreed that Blakelock should begin collecting rent up to 21 June next, and a price was to be calculated for gas to mills; it appears that mill owners were not among the very first consumers. In fact they were offered gas at 14s. per 1,000 cubic feet, this type of measure implying that some form of early gas meter had been adopted. The first expansion was sanctioned on 3 May and a new retort house was to be built, capable of holding 20 retorts. Two weeks later the Committee decided not to contract for a period of less than half a year (except for new customers), and R. Hirst was appointed to replace Baulby.²² It would seem that the Leeds Gas Light Company had no difficulty in obtaining men with managerial skills.

¹⁸ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 5 Oct. 1818.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1819.

²⁰ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 8 Feb. 1819.

²¹ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 1 Mar. 1819.

²² *Ibid.*, 17 May 1819.

An example of special price agreements being arranged is that for places of public divine worship. They were to be charged for one night in the week at one-sixth of the charge made to the public, and two nights at one-third. On 24 September, to encourage consumption, it was decided to offer a scale of discounts to mill owners (Table 3), where gas was taken by meter. By 20 September the Company was producing at almost full capacity, as is shown by a letter to Fenton, Murray and Wood asking them to repair a gasometer which was absolutely necessary for supplying the town. In October 1819, besides making the final call of 10 per cent, the Committee heard a report on the state of progress of the works. There was a gasometer house containing two gasometers capable of holding 48,000 cubic feet of gas, a retort house with 40 retorts, condensers, a purifier, committee rooms, a joiner's shop, a smith's shop, sheds for lime and coal, substantial entrance gates, and a paved yard, all for £8,000! Mains pipes were now laid through 30 or 40 streets (about seven miles). The cost so far amounted to £17,130 8s. 3d. To this would be added the cost of the second retort house, an amount for laying mains, and £1,000 still owed to the engineers. It seemed likely that the cost would exceed the original £20,100. The lights so far contracted for were 635 cockspurs of different jets, and 803 argands of different bores. A price had been fixed with the Commissioners for Lamps of 50s. per 1,000 cubic feet of gas, out of which 9s. were for lighting, extinguishing, cleaning, renewing and keeping in repair.²³

TABLE 3.

Discounts offered to Mill Owners, 24 September 1819.

5%	on half yearly payment of	£30
10%	on half yearly payment of	£40
15%	on half yearly payment of	£60
20%	on half yearly payment of	£100 upwards

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Committee Minutes 1817-44, 24 Sept. 1819.

Subsequent to the original scale of discounts offered to mill owners, the price of gas was reduced to 12s. per 1,000 cubic feet and the scale of discounts revised, to include mill owners supplied by contract (Table 4). By 29 October 1819 a further extension had been approved and a retort house was to be built by Cawood. Also the wages of the eight men employed in the retort house (four in the day, and four at

²³ L.C.A. Acc. 1191, General Meeting Minutes 1817-70, 4 Oct. 1819.

TABLE 4.

Revision of Discounts offered to Mill Owners, 15 Oct. 1819.

10% on half yearly payment of £50

20% on half yearly payment of £100 upwards

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Committee Minutes 1817-44, 15 Oct. 1819.

night) were increased to 26s. per week between 1 November and 1 March, the 'busy' season. Demand appears to have been buoyant. The Company was prospering and on 18 November 1819 it was resolved that new applicants for gas be informed that it was producing at almost full capacity, and could not supply them.²⁴ Approximately two weeks later Phillips's dry lime purifier was adopted,²⁵ and on 15 December a special general meeting was held to discuss ways of raising money to finish the works, and also to revise the price list. The Committee was given power to raise a further £5,000 by calling for a further 25 per cent from subscribers.²⁶ Interest was to be paid half yearly at five per cent, prior to dividend payments. The revised price list is shown in Table 5. The Company was anxious to have a liaison with other companies, and in a letter it sent out to such companies it requested, "pray say if you have any meters in use, and if so, how you approve of them and what rate per 1,000 cubic feet you charge for gas by the meter?".²⁷ It is likely that the Leeds Gas Light Company was

TABLE 5.

Scale of Charges per annum for Shops, 15 December 1819 (£ s. d.).

From dusk until	9 o'clock			10 o'clock			11 o'clock			12 o'clock		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Argand 6 hole	2	0	0	2	13	0	3	8	0	4	1	0
9	2	10	0	3	6	0	4	2	0	4	18	0
12	3	0	0	3	19	0	4	18	0	5	17	0
18	3	15	0	4	18	0	6	1	0	7	4	0
24	4	5	0	5	12	0	6	19	0	8	6	0
Cockspur 1 jet	1	10	0	2	0	0	2	10	0	3	0	0
2	1	15	0	2	6	0	2	17	0	3	8	0
3	2	0	0	2	13	0	3	6	0	3	19	0
Batwing No. 1	2	10	0	3	6	0	4	2	0	4	18	0
2	3	15	0	4	18	0	6	1	0	7	4	0

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, General Meeting Minutes 1817-70, 15 Dec. 1819.

²⁴ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 18 Nov. 1819.²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1819.²⁶ L.C.A. Acc. 1191, General Meeting Minutes 1817-70, 15 Dec. 1819.²⁷ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 4 Jan. 1820.

among the earliest to adopt meters, even though gas continued to be mainly sold by contract. It was also resolved that coke should not be sold other than by the cartload. The Company used coke in ovens which heated retorts, and was able to sell it because of the clean, steady, intense heat it afforded. As a by-product of gas companies coke became cheaper. Other by-products sold were coal-tar and ammoniacal liquor, bricks from the yard, and even manure from the horses. Coal-tar was so called because of its resemblance to tar, but it was superior to tar for waterproofing wood. Ammoniacal liquor was used in chemical works, for tanning leather, and as a mordant in dyeing. Besides stimulating other industries, gas works provided employment, although after their initial construction they were not labour intensive.

On 1 May 1820 it was resolved to borrow a further £3,000 from subscribers to pay for further developments, interest to be paid as before. In September, after Blakelock's death, the office was made more efficient by dividing its function into two parts, an office for coke and an office for gas, reflecting the two most important aspects of a gas company.²⁸ Early in October an advertisement appeared in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, appealing to shipwrights, boat builders and farmers, to buy coal-tar at 4d. a gallon; they were also selling coke, and offering the hire of the Company's weighing machine in the yard.²⁹ They were prepared to promote sales. Business was expanding, and by November they were considering a further 20 retorts and the extension of mains pipes. People were also now contracting for gas in the mornings. Three months later a new gasometer was constructed. On 25 April 1821 a letter was sent to the proprietors stating that the Company was obliged to extend its works to increase the supply of gas for the following winter, and that gas meters had been introduced, through which consumers might be supplied at 10s. per 1,000 cubic feet. This denotes a further price reduction, but although gas meters were now available to all consumers, contracting remained the most popular method of sale (Table 6).

On 5 May 1823 the scale of discounts was again revised (Table 7), and the trend was towards higher payments; these discounts now extended further than solely to mill owners, possibly indicating a growing demand. Soon, however, the Company was threatened by the establishment of an oil gas works, and on 1 February 1824 a sub-committee was appointed to watch the progress of the Oil Gas Company's Bill. However, despite opposition, the Oil Gas Company was

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 Sept. 1820.

²⁹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 9 Oct. 1820.

TABLE 6.

Statement of Receipts, Showing Relative Importance of the Different Methods of Sale (£ s. d.)

	21 December 1820				21 June 1821				21 December 1821											
	Collected				Collected				Due				Collected				Due			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.				
Burners	1314	18	3	1317	2	9		8	10	0	1325	10	7	71	19	0				
Meters	192	14	10	398	15	4					318	7	0	273	13	0				
Lamps	252	0	6	268	5	0								300	0	0				
Total	1759	13	7	1984	3	1		8	10	0	1643	17	7	645	12	0				

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Committee Minutes 1817-44, 7 Jan. 1822.

TABLE 7.

Revision of Scale of Discounts, applicable to all Consumers (and on Meters)

5% on half-yearly payment of	£30
10% on half-yearly payment of	£50
20% on half-yearly payment of	£100 (or 8/- per 1000 cu. ft.)
25% on half-yearly payment of	£150 (or 7/6)
30% on half-yearly payment of	£200 (or 7/-)
40% on half-yearly payment of	£300 (or 6/-)

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Committee Minutes 1817-44, 5 May 1823.

established, and the Leeds Gas Light Company did lose customers. For instance, Smith and Moore gave notice that they would discontinue their use of coal gas as soon as oil gas could be supplied.³⁰ However, the competition was not as damaging as might have been expected,³¹ and soon further expansion was under way when a gasometer was ordered from Cawood on 5 February 1825, at a price of £630. By August a new retort house was built, and four new purifiers ordered. Next month even Benyon, the mill owner, appears to have overcome his prejudice when he ordered gas.³² Then, on 3 October it was resolved to increase the loan debt by £5,000, by borrowing again from subscribers; this would finance further extensions. Reorganization occurred in December when "for the more effective management of the works a person [is] to be appointed at a salary of £300 per annum".³³ In fact

³⁰ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 6 Dec. 1824.

³¹ L.C.A. DB 237/8, Short Statement in support of the Bill, Sess. 1834.

³² L.C.A. Gas C.M., 5 Sept. 1825.

³³ *Ibid.*, 5 Dec. 1825.

three people shared the job, and the salary. In December 1826 price increases of 25 per cent were recorded. This is the only instance of price increases, and may reflect the general recession of this period. On 12 May 1827 Crosley, who supplied the meters, recommended the use of a governor to regulate the pressure of gas in the pipes, but not until more than a year later were two ordered. There is evidence of "semi-cartelization" among gas companies when, for example, on 2 March 1829, the Edinburgh Gas Company was supported by the Leeds Company in a petition to extend its capital, and in opposing the establishment of a new coal gas Company. In Leeds progress was satisfactory and the Coal Gas Company continued to expand, "the gas main to be continued along Basinghall Street to the junction with the main in Bond Street".³⁴ The loan debt was steadily reduced during the period under examination, and a price reduction from 11s. to 10s., to consumers other than mill owners, occurred on 5 April 1830. It is difficult to see that this reduction was the result of deliberate external pressure; more likely the economy was recovering and, with it, demand for gas. However, external pressure influenced expansion, "several mill owners in Water Lane and Holbeck having applied for a supply of gas and submitted to the Committee the propriety of extending their mains to Holbeck, which if carried into effect would require the erection of a new gasometer at the works".³⁵

The approximate cost of this was estimated as follows: £850 for the extension of piping, £1,000 for the new gasometer and £650 for the extra retorts, making a total of £2,500. This would produce an additional 50,000 cubic feet of gas per day at 8s. per 1,000 cubic feet (less than the usual 10s. because of the discount), which was £20 per day and £2,000 for eighteen weeks; they decided to begin work.³⁶ On 15 April 1831 the Committee decided to oppose the proposed increase in the Poor Rate. In fact the valuation carried out by surveyors and conveyed to the Company in a letter³⁷ provides valuable information. For instance we learn that by 25 June 1831 it owned 13½ miles of mains (valued at £52,000), and that the value of the freehold property was £6,000.

By December 1831 the Oil Gas Company was applying to Parliament for permission to manufacture coal gas; not surprisingly this move was vigorously opposed. On 4 April 1833 the scale of discounts was again revised, mainly to cater for increasing revenues; for

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 Nov. 1829.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Nov. 1830.

³⁶ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 6 Dec. 1830.

³⁷ L.C.A. DB 237/6, Letter to Committee of Gas Light Company, 25 June 1831.

instance the top discount was now 40 per cent on £500 upwards. The Company was threatened when, on 12 April, a paragraph appeared in the *Leeds Times* discussing the breaking of their monopoly; they chose to ignore this for the moment. However, in response to similar stimuli, the Committee circulated a letter refuting the claim that subscribers had been receiving between 20 and 50 per cent on shares. A glance at Table 8 will confirm that the claim was untrue. However, the Company was certainly lucrative. As far as

TABLE 8.

Showing half-yearly Dividend Payments, from the first Payment to December 1835.

7½%	21	12	1820	to	21	6	1821
7½%	21	6	1821	to	21	12	1821
5%	21	12	1821	to	21	6	1822
5%	21	6	1822	to	21	12	1822
5%	21	12	1822	to	21	6	1823
5%	21	6	1823	to	21	12	1823
5%	21	12	1823	to	21	6	1824
5%	21	6	1824	to	21	12	1824
5%	21	12	1824	to	21	6	1825
0%	21	6	1825	to	21	12	1825
5%	21	12	1825	to	21	6	1826
0%	21	6	1826	to	21	6	1826
5%	21	12	1826	to	21	6	1827
0%	21	6	1827	to	21	12	1827
5%	21	12	1827	to	21	6	1828
0%	21	6	1828	to	21	12	1828
5%	21	12	1828	to	21	6	1829
5%	21	6	1829	to	21	12	1829
5%	21	12	1829	to	21	6	1830
5%	21	6	1830	to	21	12	1830
5%	21	12	1830	to	21	6	1831
5%	21	6	1831	to	21	12	1831
5%	21	12	1831	to	21	6	1832
5%	21	6	1832	to	21	12	1832
5%	21	12	1832	to	21	6	1833
5%	21	6	1833	to	21	12	1833
3%	21	12	1833	to	21	6	1834
4%	21	6	1834	to	21	12	1834
4%	21	12	1834	to	21	6	1835
4%	21	6	1835	to	21	12	1835

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, General Meeting Minutes 1817-70.

prices are concerned, for most of the period the Leeds Gas Light Company charged between 14s. and 10s. per 1,000 cubic feet (before discount), whereas in London it was 15s. during the 1820s, then 10s. by the mid-1830s. Hull customers were charged 15s., and not until 1833-4 did the Oxford Company reduce its price from 21s.³⁸ If these prices are worthy of comparison the Leeds Company was not overcharging. However, despite this, progress towards a new company continued, and on 5 September 1833 a sub-committee was appointed to monitor developments. Then, on 11 December 1833 the price of gas was reduced by the Leeds Company to 8s. per 1,000 cubic feet, probably in preparation for the ensuing parliamentary battle. This time the opposition to the new company was successful. However, by 1 September 1834 Atkinson, the solicitor, was empowered to take steps for preventing the further opening of streets by the New Gas Company, which had begun operation without legal sanction, which was not received until later. The opposition to the New Company yields fresh information. By 1834 the old Gas Company owned 18 miles of mains, and the quantity of gas produced in 24 hours was approximately 170,000 cubic feet. Also by 1834 they had 120 retorts; many houses had been constructed since the works were built and the neighbourhood was very run-down.³⁹ Prior to the Leeds New Gas Company Act receiving Royal Assent, a last attempt was made to stave off competition; where necessary, price reductions were sanctioned. This appears to support Falkus's claim that the chief reason for price reductions was the threat of competition.⁴⁰ However, the Leeds New Gas Company Act received Royal Assent on 21 July 1835. This did not appear to affect confidence in the original company, whose shares were being sold by J. H. and G. Risdale in mid-1835 for £140.⁴¹ Further, the Leeds Gas Light Company continued to supply the town's lamps, and on 7 December 1835 the Committee again resolved to extend their mains. Clearly the prophets of doom were mistaken about the destructive price competition that would result with two coal gas companies operating in the same town.

Problems and Improvements

What problems, apart from the threat of competition, faced the Leeds Gas Company in its early years? One of the first was Benyon's

³⁸ M. E. Falkus, "The British Gas Industry before 1850", *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser. XX (1967), 501.

³⁹ L.C.A. DB 237/4, Raper's Memoranda, undated, [? late 1834].

⁴⁰ M. E. Falkus, *op. cit.*, 501.

⁴¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 20 June 1835.

reluctance to have the gas works near his factory. In fact the fear of explosion was sufficient for the Chartered Company in London to surround their gasometers by a building in the early days. However, in Leeds the works were built in York Street, and no major explosions are recorded. The same cannot be said of minor explosions, and a woman was injured in consequence of searching for gas with a naked light.⁴²

On 20 July 1818 Darwin, the pipe supplier, was approached to ascertain the whereabouts of the Company's consignment of pipes; there were delivery delays. There were also problems of quality. The Committee claimed that the pipes were not perfect and would not withstand the pressure from the water-pump used to test them.⁴³ The issue reached its peak on 3 August 1818 when it was decided that Darwin was to be informed that unless the quality of the pipes improved he would not be paid. However, the problem persisted: it is likely to have been outside Darwin's control, given the crude techniques of the time.

The Committee requested Baulby, in June 1818, to ensure that mains pipes were correctly based, so as to have minimal movement after jointing. However, it was reported on 5 March 1819 that certain mains pipes had to be exhumed because of poor jointing. Bad joints permitted leakages, and the worst reported was a leak of 2,250 cubic feet on a daily production of 4,750 cubic feet.⁴⁴ Mains were normally laid with an upward inclination of one inch in 12 yards, and similarly in a downward direction; moisture collected in the shallow trough and was pumped away.

Not only were the engineers late in completing the works, but it was resolved on 16 June 1818 that the retorts were to be reset according to Cawood's plan, Murray's being unsatisfactory. Then in November 1825 the Committee resolved that, because the new gasometer had failed to work, Cawood was only to be paid £315.⁴⁵ Eventually he was asked to remove it, "it being perfectly useless to the Company",⁴⁶ and either refund the money, or build another. Obviously there were problems with both these engineering firms; probably because gas engineering was a relatively new science.

Other problems included minor incidents in the yard; these were quickly dealt with as is exemplified by the decision, on 3 January 1820, that no coke was to be sold other than by the Clerk, to prevent

⁴² L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Gas Memoranda, undated, [? late 1834].

⁴³ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 6 July 1818.

⁴⁴ L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Daily Record of Production, 6 Aug. 1826.

⁴⁵ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 7 Nov. 1825.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6 Feb. 1826.

the workmen "pocketing" money. Further, in November 1820 the Committee was disturbed because a workman had received money for coal-tar; in future all payments were to be made to the Clerk, or the Manager.⁴⁷ Vandalism was in evidence when in June 1820 two men were committed to Wakefield House of Correction for damaging Company property, including lamps.⁴⁸ In November 1820 a number of people were summonsed for not paying rent and being abusive to collectors. In fact G. Marsland, of Elephant and Castle, was prosecuted at this time, and again in December of the same year.⁴⁹ However, "cutting-off" is not mentioned until 19 December 1826.

The first mention of the Company's biggest problem occurs on 19 August 1819 when it was reported that certain people had been observed burning lights outside hours contracted for. This problem grew steadily worse: inspectors, appointed to try to limit this offence, had no right of access into private buildings. It seems that offenders were given reasonable notice, since only on their third reported offence were they to be charged extra; then, if they refused to pay, they would be summonsed before magistrates.⁵⁰ On 10 December 1819 five people were summonsed for not paying rent and being abusive to and regulations of the Company were sent to consumers, including a list of offences. These were, burning with bigger flames than allowed, burning longer than contracted for at night, burning in the morning before daylight, burning during the day, burning on Sundays, and finally enlarging the holes in burners.⁵¹ At the same time the Committee wrote to other companies asking what steps they had taken to limit flame length and reporting that "with us it is burned most extravagantly, and we have not been able to hit upon any plan to prevent this unfair consumption".⁵² Abuse of contracts continued, even after the more widespread adoption of meters, since gas continued to be sold by contract. The worst offenders were butchers and publicans, and on 17 November 1824 for publicans, and in February 1825 for butchers, it was resolved that they would only be supplied with gas via meters.

There were also problems with meters which the Company was buying from Crosley and which were offered to consumers of all types on 26 January 1820. In January 1821 it was reported that the Com-

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 Nov. 1820.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 June 1820.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 Dec. 1820.

⁵⁰ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 29 Oct. 1820.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15 Dec. 1819.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3 Jan. 1820.

mittee had lost confidence in Crosley's meters; they claimed also that Richard Kemplay's had failed to register, though gas was still flowing through.⁵³ However, meters continued to be used and many of the problems are likely to have been overcome. This is shown by a letter to proprietors in April 1821 saying that the Leeds Gas Light Company's Committee wanted to extend that method of supplying gas.⁵⁴

However, problems recurred, and eventually the Company changed to Wigton's meters; but it appears that problems with early meters persisted, as a written complaint concerning deficiencies was sent to Wigton in March 1823.

Another event which posed a problem as far as the Company was concerned was an increase in the Poor Rate. There were two recorded appeals against such increases: one on 17 May 1826 and another on 15 April 1831. The latter is well documented by solicitors' records.⁵⁵ Grounds for complaint included the fact that the Company was assessed on pipes and mains which formed part of its stock in trade, whereas others were not assessed on such material. They also claimed that the Oil Gas Company was not assessed on mains and pipes.

A potential threat occurred when, on 20 April 1825, the Committee received a letter from several gas companies in London, asking them to oppose the British Gas Company Bill which would have resulted in the supplanting of local companies. However, there is no further mention of this and the Bill may be assumed to have been abortive. The Company was also threatened by the establishment of a rival Oil Gas Company. This was first mentioned in the Minutes on 1 March 1824, but the subject had been referred to previously in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, when the superiority of oil gas was heralded.⁵⁶ It was claimed to be free of sulphuretted hydrogen, thus not damaging metallic goods, pictures, or elegant bindings of books, and would only produce half the heat, without the unpleasant smell associated with coal gas, all at the same cost. It was considered that since oil gas companies had been formed in Edinburgh, Manchester and Liverpool, the same must be successful in Leeds. On 6 December 1824 a copy of a circular was sent by the Coal Gas Company to consumers, showing the cheapness of coal gas in relation to oil gas: later it would be proved correct.

Soon after the commencement of work on the Oil Gas Company the Coal Gas Company was troubled by damage by the former to their

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1821.

⁵⁴ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 25 Apr. 1821.

⁵⁵ L.C.A. DB 237/6, Letter to the Committee of the Leeds Gas Light Company, 25 June 1831.

⁵⁶ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 29 Jan. 1824.

mains and branch pipes and on 7 March 1825 T. Tenant and G. Banks met the Committee of the Oil Gas Company to discuss negligence by their workmen in laying pipes.

The Oil Gas Company in fact never posed a threat. This fact is documented in solicitors' records concerning the Leeds New Gas Company.⁵⁷ In them it is claimed that the Oil Gas Company competed with the Coal Gas Company, but a contemporary solicitor has underlined this statement, writing at the side that there never was any real competition. On 5 December 1831 the Committee learned of the Oil Gas Company's application to Parliament for permission to manufacture gas from coal; this move was opposed vigorously, and in January 1832 several other companies were written to, to solicit their support in opposition to this Bill.⁵⁸ In October of the same year the Committee was asked by the Oil Gas Company whether "there is any disposition in that Company to come to any arrangements with the Oil Gas Company allowing them to make gas from coal and divide the town".⁵⁹ The Coal Gas Company refused, claiming that they already had an agreement: you use oil, we use coal. Soon there were claims of monopoly practices, massive profits, and expensive gas,⁶⁰ but these were vigorously denied.

On 2 October 1833 a parliamentary agent was engaged to monitor the progress of the Leeds New Gas Company. At the same time a brief for magistrates was prepared, in opposition to the Leeds New Gas Company, in which were included such points as the extra nuisance caused by two companies digging in public streets, and the facts that the quality of gas light was good and the price modest. On 2 December 1833 J. Clapham and J. Dickinson, two of the old Company's three managers, were asked to go to London to lead the opposition to the new company. In February 1834 a circular was distributed, claiming that representatives of a New Gas Company (including a considerable number of shareholders in the late Oil Gas Company, which had been dissolved by Act in the previous session) had said that they were going to try and obtain an Act to incorporate the subscribers in a public company.⁶¹ In the meantime they had purchased from trustees appointed in the dissolving Act the premises, works, pipes, mains, used by the Oil Gas Company, and had actually commenced manufacturing and selling coal gas. The Leeds Gas Light Company Committee

⁵⁷ L.C.A. DB 237/8, Short Statement in support of the Bill, Sess. 1834.

⁵⁸ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 13 Jan. 1832.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1832.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13 Sept. 1833.

⁶¹ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 12 Feb. 1834.

was going to oppose the Bill even more vigorously. The case for a second coal gas company rested on the following points: first, the increase in population since 1818 had created enough demand for two companies; second, the present company was limited to a capital of £20,100 plus a loan of £10,000, and could not supply enough gas. Then there were the usual claims regarding profits, poor gas, and that with two companies the price would be reduced.⁶² Counter to this, the existing Gas Company claimed that they had sufficient capacity for twice the existing demand; another company would deprive the first without sufficiently benefiting the second, and competition would result in mutual destruction by driving the price below a remunerating level. They also maintained that there was no room for an improvement in quality, and one witness claimed "its purity and illuminating power is better than almost everywhere else in the kingdom".⁶³ The Leeds Gas Light Company also said that a 'trick' was being played and this is probably the main reason why the Leeds New Gas Light Company Bill was not successful in the first instance. They claimed:

the truth is that a trick is attempted and the petitioners rely on the justice of Parliament to default that attempt when exposed . . . the promoters of the Bill are substantially . . . the old Oil Gas Company . . . their original speculation having failed, they have adopted a method of retrieving their losses, sufficiently ingenious, but not very honest – they were restrained by their own agreement . . . from making gas from coal and they were deterred from the attempt to get rid of that engagement by a direct application to Parliament by the failure of a similar attempt of the Edinburgh Oil Gas Company in 1827 . . . they therefore went to Parliament to dissolve their corporation altogether; and now they come with a new Act of Incorporation as if they were mere strangers and repudiating all connection with the defunct company – after having gone through the solemn farce of selling their estate through the medium of trustees . . . and, from these trustees themselves being again the purchasers.⁶⁴

It was soon apparent that the Leeds Gas Light Company had been successful in their opposition to the Bill. However, the New Company continued to manufacture coal gas, and an injunction was sought to prevent them from breaking up streets.⁶⁵ Then, on 16 February 1835 it was reported that the New Gas Company was to make a second attempt at recognition and this time they were more successful; their Act received Royal Assent on 21 July 1835.

⁶² L.C.A. DB 237, Brief for Magistrates against Bill, undated, [? Feb. 1834].

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ L.C.A. DB 237, Brief for Magistrates against Bill, undated, [? Feb. 1834].

⁶⁵ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 17 Oct. 1834.

A major improvement in the manufacture of coal gas in Leeds was brought about by the transition from a wet, to a dry, lime purifier; this, besides aiding the manufacture of purer gas, solved part of the problem of offensive smells. The dry lime purifier, invented by Reuben Phillips in 1817, was first referred to in the Committee Minutes of 2 February 1818, but was not adopted until 1819. It seems the Company was quick to utilise innovations, as it has been claimed that this type of purifier was not widely adopted until after 1870.⁶⁶

In September 1818 a meeting was held to recommend, and explain the use of, Phillips's patent purifier.⁶⁷ At this meeting Houldsworth, acting for Phillips, offered the use of the patent for two guineas per retort, per year. The Leeds Gas Light Company Committee accepted this offer for 40 retorts, subject to certain conditions. Houldsworth was given 24 hours to consider. However, one month later a wet lime purifier was adopted since Houldsworth had delayed so long.⁶⁸ Fourteen months later the Committee resolved to adopt Phillips's patent purifier, and Charlesworth was given power to contract with him.⁶⁹ Signs of trouble appeared on 3 June 1822 when a settlement was to be made with Phillips relating to his 'supposed' patent right. The debate continued until 1824 when an action was brought by Phillips against the Leeds Gas Light Company for patent infringement.⁷⁰ The result is not clear, but Phillips is likely to have won, since on 3 April 1826 it was resolved that Phillips's offer for the use of his patent be accepted. The final fate of Phillips is evident: eventually many companies joined together and used their combined monetary strength legally to deprive him of the royalties he demanded.

Another improvement was effected by the adoption of gas meters (even though the early ones were prone to break down). This move was probably influenced by the abuse of the rental system that took place. The invention of the gas meter is generally attributed to Samuel Clegg, who took out a patent in 1816. The earliest mention of meters at the Leeds Gas Light Company occurred on 15 October 1819, although they were only offered to mill owners; not until January 1820, after trials had been made, were they offered to general consumers.⁷¹ However, encouragement was needed and a note was circulated explaining that "no more gas is paid for than is used; and a

⁶⁶ Dean Chandler and A. Douglas Lacey, *The Rise of the Gas Industry in Britain* (1949), 63.

⁶⁷ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 30 Sept. 1818.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 Oct. 1818.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1818.

⁷⁰ L.C.A. DB 237/9, Brief for the Defendants, undated, [? late 1824].

⁷¹ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 26 Jan. 1820.

fair and satisfactory trial has been made by several merchants and manufacturers".⁷² The first meters proved unsatisfactory and on 29 April 1822 others operating on an improved principle were ordered. Up to November 1826 the Company bore the cost of meters, but on 6 November it was resolved that people desiring meters were to pay for them. The Leeds Gas Light Company was not using Clegg's patent meters, because on 3 April 1829 it was resolved to oppose Crosley's application to extend his patent. Finally, on 6 June 1831 the Committee resolved to let people rent meters, presumably to encourage wider adoption by those who could not afford to buy them (Table 9).

TABLE 9.

Rental Prices for Meters, and the Purchase Price (£ s. d.)

<i>Lights per meter</i>	<i>Purchase Price</i>			<i>Rental Price (per annum)</i>
	£	s.	d.	
3	2	4	6	5/-
5	2	13	0	5/-
10	3	9	6	8/-
20	4	13	0	10/-
30	6	6	0	14/-
45	9	4	0	20/-
60	12	5	0	25/-
80	15	10	0	35/-
100	19	15	0	40/-

Source: L.C.A. Acc. 1191, Committee Minutes 1817-44, 6 June 1831.

The governor was adopted to regulate the pressure of gas in pipes, essential for minimizing leakages. Again Clegg is assumed to have been the inventor. On 12 May 1827 Crosley attended a meeting and recommended the use of a governor to regulate the pressure of gas from the works; the Committee decided on a trial and in September 1828 two governors were ordered with the necessary pressure gauges.⁷³

On 6 December 1819 enquiries were being made as to the cost of iron gasometers in relation to brick; if they were found to be cheaper they were to be built. The Company was fortunate in the choice of Hirst as a manager; he was active as an innovator. They adopted his model of a gas-holder on 16 January 1821, and four years later agreed that "the proposal of Hirst's . . . to erect the new retort house upon a

⁷² L.C.A. Gas C.M., 25 Apr. 1821.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1 Sept. 1828.

principle to admit the coke being disposed of below without the labour of wheeling"⁷⁴ be adopted. Further developments occurred when, in December 1828, the Managers were empowered to change from brick to the more efficient iron retorts;⁷⁵ Hawick Gas Light Company was still building brick retorts in 1831.⁷⁶ Possibly, as far as the Leeds Gas Light Company's Committee was concerned, the ultimate achievement was the request to Clapham and Dickinson to engage an office for them in the town in 1834.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Falkus's claim that the erection of gas establishments coincided with booms in the British economy is correct in respect to the Leeds Gas Light Company. However, the reasons are confused. He suggests two reasons: first, that gas company profits were heavily dependent on the consumption of gas by business concerns, since street-lighting contracts were generally considered to give little remuneration, and second, that financing of gas companies was frequently undertaken on industrial and bank credit, which was more likely to be forthcoming in periods of optimism. The former reason is likely to be true, the latter is not. The initial finance came from subscribers (whose names and occupations are not documented), and after the final share call had been made⁷⁸ additional finance was raised by borrowing from subscribers at a fixed rate of interest, which had precedence over dividend payments. It is possible that the Leeds Gas Light Company was unusual in the nature of its financing.

The demand for gas came initially from varied sources, including the Commissioners for Lamps and private houses. Mills followed slightly later, and, in fact, many continued to manufacture their own gas.⁷⁹ Falkus's claim that before 1850 demand for gas was almost solely for light is substantiated in Leeds, although it appears that private houses were using gas earlier than was the general case.

The overall impression gained about the Company over the first eighteen years is one of a successful, well-managed concern which, despite certain problems, declared a fairly consistent, considerably-sized, dividend. It appears to have been an active and efficient Com-

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 6 Aug. 1825.

⁷⁵ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 1 Dec. 1828.

⁷⁶ R. E. Scott, "Light without a switch, the story of the Hawick Gas Light Company", *Trans. Hawick Arch. Soc.* (1969), 30.

⁷⁷ L.C.A. Gas C.M., 5 May 1834.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 Oct. 1819.

⁷⁹ L.C.A. DB 237, Petitioners Evidence, undated [? late 1834].

pany in many respects, and a liaison was maintained with other companies. The Committee responded to demand 'indicators' in the sense that they often revised the range of burners offered, and the facility for special agreements was quickly arranged. Further, they actively promoted sales, both by advertising the Company's products, and by offering discounts, first to mill owners who took gas by meter, then to all mill owners, and finally to all consumers. These discounts were occasionally revised, always in favour of higher payments. The Committee also reduced prices, not always as the obvious result of outside influences. The Company was often expanded and other industries were also aided, notably those using coke and coal-tar.

There did not appear to be any problem in obtaining the services of engineers or managers, one of the latter, Hirst, appearing to be particularly good as an innovator. However, difficulties arose because of the limited state of knowledge about gas engineering. The supply of raw materials does not appear ever to have posed any problems, unlike the supply of pipes. Nevertheless the Company received the benefit of commercial economies of scale on certain of the inputs, including pipes. Minor problems in the yard were not inherent in the early gas industry, unlike the abuse of gas contracts. This was by far the biggest problem and although the gas meter was adopted, this did not overcome the difficulty. However, the Company's success was not affected.

Finally, the Company appeared efficient in the sense that new innovations were quickly utilized, particularly the dry lime purifier. The 'threat' by rival oil gas never really materialised, although the manner in which the change to manufacturing coal-gas was effected is unusual. However, after the establishment of the Leeds New Gas Company, the two companies existed together until the take-over by the Leeds Corporation in 1870, the threat of which probably promoted the period of greatest cooperation between the two during the prelude to take-over.

THE LEEDS RATIONAL RECREATION SOCIETY, 1852-9: "MUSIC FOR THE PEOPLE" IN A MID-VICTORIAN CITY

by
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Introduction

THE PAST DECADE has witnessed a rapid expansion of interest in the history of popular recreation. In an attempt to construct a wider picture of past societies than that provided by traditional avenues of historical investigation, social historians have begun to look at the innumerable leisure activities which absorbed so much of the time, money and enthusiasm of the "common people". One theme attracting considerable attention, especially amongst scholars interested in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, concerns the attempt by the governing classes to maintain control over those activities, either by direct repression or through provision of more "rational" alternatives.¹ It is the field of "Rational Recreation" that forms the focus of this study, and, in particular, the efforts of the ruling élite in one provincial city to restructure mid-nineteenth-century popular culture through the medium of music.

Music has not traditionally received much attention from historians of Victorian society.² Yet, from about 1840, it was arguably one of the most pervasive of all leisure pursuits, forming the specific interest of many thousands of people and the concomitant of many other recreational activities.³ At the same time, it became a commonplace of

¹ For illuminating discussions of the attack on popular recreation, see R. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973); B. Harrison, "Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth Century England", *Past and Present* (1967); R. Storch, "The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9 No. 4 (1975-6), 481-509. For a detailed and stimulating analysis of rational alternatives, see P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (1978).

² For a survey of music in the Victorian period, see E. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (1964), chapters six and seven.

³ It is impossible to estimate the number of people actively involved in popular musical activity in the nineteenth century, but available statistics suggest that the number of participants and observers was enormous. Music had an especially strong position within working-class culture. One brass instrument manufacturer had the name of some 10,000 amateur bands on its lists in the 1890s. There were innumerable

(cont. on p. 138)

Victorian moral ideology that music, provided it was divorced from any "immoral associations", was a valuable social tool, a balm for all manner of evils. *The Times* gave succinct expression to this view when, in 1859, it informed readers that "the disciples of Orpheus" were in general "the most industrious, sober and estimable members of the population".⁴ As the century progressed, a wide range of musical institutions, including singing classes, brass bands, orchestras, concerts and lectures, were initiated by middle class moral reformers, anxious to "civilise" the lower orders by exposing them to "the highest and finest of recreations". This "Music for the People" movement, as it became known to contemporaries, was to become a central element in the programme of rational recreationists throughout the country and helped to give so much Victorian musical activity its decidedly "moralistic" overtones.⁵

The "People's Concert", a performance of "good" music, at a price within the grasp of working people, was to be one of the most noticeable features of the Music for the People movement, and its emergence in one northern city in the 1850s forms the core of this study.

(note 3 cont.)

choral societies and amateur orchestras in Britain by the late nineteenth century, many of which contained considerable numbers of working men. Again, the music hall had become a multi-million pound industry by the end of the century. When one looks at other forms of popular recreation, it is hard to think of many which at some stage in the year did not embellish their activity or celebrate their progress without some form of musical accompaniment.

⁴ *The Times*, 29 August 1859.

⁵ There is not space here to discuss the various musical institutions which were developed in order to further the campaigns of rational recreationists. However, it is worth noting that the factory owner, who had been in the forefront of the assault on popular leisure habits since the late eighteenth century, made some of the first really serious attempts to utilise music as a form of "social control", through the factory band and choir. The 1840s was an especially important decade in the history of "Music for the People", with the "sight-singing mania", inspired by the work of John Hullah, John Curwen and Joseph Mainzer, leading to the establishment of singing classes, many of which were funded by middle-class philanthropists all over Britain. For an introduction to the subject of music and moral reform, see B. Pritchard, "The Music Festival and The Choral Society in England" (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1968), 502-71. See also B. Rainbow, *The Land Without Music* (1967), 35-7 and 121-38 for material on the origins of the "sight-singing mania"; W. Shaw, "John Curwen", in K. Simpson (ed.) *Some Great Musical Educators* (1976); P. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music*, Vol. 1 (1947), 3-10, for Joseph Mainzer's career. Octavia Hill, "Colour, Space and Music For The People", *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 15 (1884); F. Marshall, "Music and the People", *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 8 (1880) and W. J. Galloway, *Musical England* (1910), are useful for the later history of musical philanthropy.

By the mid-nineteenth century concerts were a firmly established feature of social life in most European centres, with even the citizens of a provincial city such as Leeds enjoying some thirty to forty concerts a year during the 1840s.⁶ Admission prices varied quite considerably, according to the dictates of fashion and the policy of the promoter as much as to the quality of the music, but, in general, prices made attendance essentially a pastime for the upper reaches of society. The privilege of seeing the celebrated Madame Grisi and Signor Mario at the Leeds Music Hall in 1845, for example, cost a minimum of 3s. 6d.⁷ There were certainly a number of cheaper performances: in the 1850s the French conductor Louis Jullien pioneered orchestral concerts with a minimum entry of 1s., and there is plentiful evidence that working men, especially members of the early brass bands, attended his concerts in many northern towns in order to study the style of Herr Koenig on the cornet-à-pistons and M. Prospère on the ophecleide.⁸ Similarly, the concerts by local amateur choral societies, which were just beginning to come into prominence, sometimes cost as little as 6d. for entry. But, in general, it seems likely that anything other than an occasional visit to the concert hall was a financial impossibility for the majority of the working classes.

Social reformers, fired far more by moral than by artistic considerations, set out to remedy this situation. It is not known when the first "people's concerts" began, but it is likely that the series organised by the Glasgow Total Abstinence Society in 1843 was amongst the first. In 1845 Birmingham Corporation arranged for the Town Hall organ to be played one evening a week, between 7.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m., for the benefit of the labouring classes, who were to pay 3d. for the privilege.⁹ By the beginning of the next decade concerts were taking place all over the country, with perhaps a particular concentration in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Huddersfield, Bradford and Halifax were all centres of this new activity, while similar events were held on an occasional basis in a

⁶ This is based on a study of the frequency of concerts advertised in the *Leeds Intelligencer*.

⁷ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 28 Aug. 1845.

⁸ J. L. Scott, "The Evolution of the Brass Band and its Repertoire in Northern England" (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Sheffield University, 1970), 212. For a brief introduction to the concert promotions of Jullien, see R. Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot, 1973), 126-37. On the expansion of concert life in general in the period 1830-48, see W. Weber, *Music and the Middle Classes* (1975).

⁹ For the Glasgow concerts, see *Mainzer's Musical Times*, 15 April 1843; for Birmingham, see J. Sutcliffe Smith, *The History of Music in Birmingham* (1845), 117.

number of smaller towns and villages.¹⁰ In Liverpool and Bradford provision was even made for the erection of large public halls in which the working classes could listen to "the soul-inspiring strains of music, or to the fervid eloquence of some gifted teacher, [thus] going to their several houses elevated and refreshed, rising in the morning to their daily toil without headache and without regret".¹¹

The emergence of the Leeds Rational Recreation Society

The "people's concerts" movement was to become a significant feature of the recreational life of Leeds in the 1850s, just as it was in other northern towns. Leeds, like most developing industrial towns of this period, suffered from a variety of problems which aroused the interest of the middle classes, and it is hardly surprising that local reformers should have turned enthusiastically to this movement as a possible weapon in their fight against moral degradation and social unrest. Originally given a borough charter in 1626, Leeds had grown to be the seventh largest town in England by 1801, with a population of some 60,000. By 1851 this figure had risen to 172,258, as first the textile and then the engineering industry blossomed. For many of the working classes, particularly those inhabiting the rapidly expanding area immediately south of the river Aire, living conditions were nothing short of appalling; but despite the efforts of a small number of middle-class reformers little was done by the money-conscious Corporation to ease the problems. A cholera outbreak in 1848-9, killing between 1,400 and 2,000 people, and a typhus epidemic in 1851 were testimony to the conditions in the very worst streets of central Leeds. Not surprisingly, in response to these conditions Leeds developed a reputation for working-class radicalism, and J. F. C. Harrison has gone so far as to claim that "Leeds in the 1830s was

¹⁰ For information on concerts in Manchester, see P. Razzell and R. W. Wainwright (eds.) *The Victorian Working Class* (1973), 172, and K. Allan, "The Recreations and Amusements of the Industrial Working Class, 1825-1850" (unpub. M.A. thesis, Manchester University, 1947), 132-5. For Oldham, see Allan, *op. cit.*, 135; for Huddersfield, see *Leeds Intelligencer*, 13 March 1852; Bradford, W. Cudworth, *Music in Bradford* (Bradford, 1885), 41; Halifax, *Halifax Guardian*, 21 Jan. 1854; for similar concerts at small towns in the Leeds area, see *Leeds Intelligencer*, 6 Nov. 1852, 30 June 1855.

¹¹ For the building of St. George's Hall, Bradford, see H. Hird, "Samuel Smith and his Music Hall", in *Bradford Remembrancer* (1972), 179-87. This quotation comes from a speech made by Samuel Smith (1804-73), the Whig mayor of Bradford between 1851 and 1853, during the foundation stone ceremony; *Bradford Observer*, 22 Sept. 1851.

second only to Manchester as a centre of Radical and working-class politics in the North". In the 1840s, according to Harrison, a highly distinctive form of Chartism, flourishing mainly amongst "factory operatives, shopkeepers and small tradesmen", emerged in the town. At the same time, many observers began to express fears about the impact of rapid urbanisation upon working-class social and moral habits. Inevitably, certain members of the ruling élite felt it increasingly necessary to develop institutions which would both reform popular taste and prevent the further development of a situation whereby, in James Hole's words of 1845, "class stands opposed to class".¹²

For six-and-a-half years, between May 1852 and its eventual dissolution in January 1859, the Leeds Rational Recreation Society added its weight to the campaign for the moral betterment and political indoctrination of the working class.¹³ Leeds was no stranger to the institutions of "rational" instruction: its Mechanics' Institute, opened in 1825, was one of the oldest in the county, and a source of considerable pride to its local benefactors. Similarly, attempts to use music as a vehicle for "social control" were not new, for the sight-singing activities of the 1840s had made an impact on the social life of the area. The German *émigré* singing teacher, Joseph Mainzer, had been invited by a number of prominent local citizens to visit the city in 1843, and his subsequent lecture series aroused sufficient interest to lead to the establishment of the Leeds-based Yorkshire Working Men's Singing Association, which had over 1,000 members in 1845, and was good enough to produce a number of successful concerts.¹⁴ But there was a widespread feeling amongst the city's moral reformers that there was still plentiful scope for action, and the Leeds Rational Recreation Society was one response to what they perceived as the problems of urban life.

The Society grew initially out of increasing concern over the apparently growing link between the public house and working-class entertainment. In December 1851, a vigorous correspondence which

¹² A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (1968 ed.), 139-40; G. Kitson Clark, "The Leeds Elite", *University of Leeds Review*, Vol. 17 (1974), 246; J. F. C. Harrison, "Chartism in Leeds", in A. Briggs (ed.), *Chartist Studies* (1960), 65, 71-2; A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 141.

¹³ The Society's concert-giving function was taken over by a council sub-committee in October 1858, following the opening of Leeds Town Hall, which, with its large concert hall, had become the venue for the concerts. The Leeds Rational Recreation Society finally disbanded on 17 Jan. 1859. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 22 Jan. 1859.

¹⁴ Mainzer's *Musical Times*, 15 April 1843, 1 July 1843, 1 Nov. 1843, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 Jan. 1845, 8 March 1845, 17 May 1845, trace the class from Mainzer's visit to the Mrs. Sunderland concert.

was to last for almost two months began in the letter columns of the two major Leeds papers, the Tory *Intelligencer* and the Whig *Mercury*. It concerned the nature of the entertainment offered to the public of Leeds by an institution called the Leeds Casino and Concert Hall. The Casino, a somewhat ramshackle wooden building in Lands Lane, which had been opened by a publican, Joseph Hobson, in 1849, was one of the first music halls to be opened in Britain. Many of the local reformers of working-class morality seem to have appreciated that here was an institution that appeared to have a genuine, and in their eyes, dangerous, appeal to the poorer classes, and over the next few months they made it the object of a vitriolic onslaught.¹⁵

The main opponents of the Casino emerged as the Revd. A. M. Stalker, a Baptist minister, and Samuel Barbour, the superintendent of the Leeds Institute, a Protestant missionary society which had been founded in 1837. These gentlemen had visited the Casino in November 1851, with the intention of distributing religious literature, and had been horrified to find an audience of some seven to eight hundred, "gazing with zest on scenes, and listening with delight to sounds, which to us, at least, were both humiliating and appalling".¹⁶ Although they never enlarged on the exact nature of the entertainment they witnessed, over the following month Stalker and Barbour went to great lengths to demonstrate that the Casino encouraged immorality. They interviewed both prostitutes and juvenile offenders in the borough goal, all of whom admitted attendance at the Casino, leading the two investigators to the belief "that nothing is there learned but wickedness".¹⁷

Joseph Hobson defended himself skilfully, stressing the educational, and, above all, the political benefits of such institutions as the Casino. Was not the working man, he asked,

more beneficially, more properly, and less harmfully employed, when listening to such music and innocent entertainments as I can afford to provide, and he pay for . . . than he would be drinking and smoking in some taproom, talking politics until he becomes a Chartist or a rebellious democrat dangerous to society, or discussing religious topics until schism, heresy, or even Deism is the consequence?¹⁸

¹⁵ For the complete correspondence, see *Leeds Mercury*, 13 Dec. 1851 to 10 Jan. 1852, and *Leeds Intelligencer*, 6 Dec. 1851 to 10 Jan. 1852. The Star Museum and Concert Hall in Bolton, opened in the early 1840s by William Sharples, was subjected to similar attacks and criticisms. For these, and for Sharples's response, see P. Bailey, *Leisure*, 19, 26, 31, 33, 46.

¹⁶ *Leeds Mercury*, 13 Dec. 1851.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 Dec. 1851, 3 Jan. 1852.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 Dec. 1851.

But the defenders of morality were not to be seduced even by such tempting arguments as these, and the majority of the correspondents in the newspaper debate sided against the Casino. Several of them had contemplated the possibility of establishing alternative recreational institutions to counteract the influence of casino and public house, and, eventually, a delighted Stalker organised a conference to discuss "the propriety of providing elevating recreations and amusements for the working classes".¹⁹ His campaign had rapidly borne fruit. On Wednesday, 11 February 1852, some fifty eminent Leeds citizens gathered in the Grand Jury room of Leeds Courthouse to deliberate on the issue of popular recreation. This was in fact to be the first meeting of the Rational Recreation Society, although the name was not formally adopted until April.²⁰

The Society began with far-ranging aspirations. At the February conference another influential local Baptist leader, the Revd. William Sinclair, supported by the Revd. G. M. Conder, proposed a resolution which, as well as summarising the quintessential doctrines of rational recreation, appeared to herald a truly far-reaching onslaught on the evils of working-class social life.

This meeting, whilst rejoicing that so many efforts are put forth in various ways for the spread of knowledge, sobriety and habits of prudence and self-reliance, cannot but lament the absence of any *enlarged and systematic* plan for supplying innocent and elevating recreations for the people, and is of the opinion that *combined and vigorous* attempts should be made to counteract the demoralising influences of places where strong drink and vicious amusements are the chief source of attraction.²¹

A sub-committee was appointed, with the task of establishing exactly what the "enlarged and systematic plan" was to include, and, after further criticisms of the Casino, the fifty gentlemen dispersed, quietly confident that an important blow had been struck for moral reform.²²

In fact, the Society never produced the alternative culture that the resolution contemplated. In the spring of 1852 an essay competition was established offering small cash prizes for the best three contributions on rational recreation written by 'working men', but, although stimulating a reasonable response, the idea was never repeated.²³ Similarly, in 1854, 1855 and 1856, the Society promised that there

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1852.

²⁰ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 17 April 1852, includes the first use of the name that I have discovered.

²¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 21 Feb. 1852. (*My italics.*)

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 17 April 1852.

were plans under way to establish a public gymnasium on Woodhouse Moor, a large tract of open space near the city centre, but the project never materialised.²⁴ The Society became almost exclusively an organisation for the provision of cheap concerts.

The introduction of "people's concerts" had not been mentioned at any stage during the debate over the Casino, although several local citizens, including William Spark, a leading local musician and organist and choirmaster of St George's church, were publicly discussing the idea at about the same time.²⁵ But the attractions of the concert quickly became apparent to the Society's sub-committee. First, a scheme of musical entertainment was well suited to the popular culture of the area. The committee was impressed by the success of popular concerts being held by philanthropists in Manchester and Liverpool, and felt that a similar venture was bound to succeed in such an intensely musical environment as the West Riding. West Yorkshire had a reputation for having perhaps the most developed popular musical culture in Britain, being described by William Hogarth in 1835 as an area pervaded by "the spirit of music . . . in a manner unknown and unfelt in the rest of our island". While the area immediately around Leeds was not quite so musically minded as the hamlets and villages of, for example, the Colne and Holme valleys, it nevertheless possessed rapidly developing brass band and choral movements, good indicators of the popular appetite for music.²⁶ Furthermore, a concert series was also relatively easy to organise, a vital consideration to men who were already quite heavily committed to other philanthropic organisations and voluntary bodies, and, crucially, relatively cheap to mount. Apart from raising a sum of £200 in 1852 to insure against heavy losses on the first series of concerts, the gentlemen of the Leeds Rational Recreation Society were able to preach the virtues of rational recreation without dipping into their pockets. A form of recreation that was both elevating and self-supporting was bound to appeal to mid-Victorian social reformers.

The Society succeeded in attracting widespread support from most sections of the Leeds élite. Of the twenty-eight individuals who served the Leeds Rational Recreation Society in an official capacity between

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 Oct. 1854, 23 June 1855, 2 May 1856.

²⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, 6 Dec. 1851.

²⁶ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 20 March 1852, reported the sub-committee's findings. For Hogarth's observation see his "A Village Oratorio", reprinted in *Mainzer's Musical Times*, 15 Nov. 1842, 131-3. For a detailed study of popular musical culture in nineteenth-century Yorkshire, see D. Russell, "The Popular Musical Societies of the Yorkshire Textile District, 1850-1914" (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1980).

1852 and 1859, the great majority appear to have been drawn from the upper echelons of local society. Their number included five clergymen, four successful entrepreneurs, a lawyer, a doctor, a surgeon and a veterinary surgeon.²⁷ The Society included many who had already made substantial contributions to the cause of social and moral reform in the city. John Hope Shaw, who was the Society's president on two occasions, was a local solicitor, three times mayor of Leeds, an active supporter of the temperance movement, and president of the Leeds Mechanics' Institute and of the Leeds Society for Promoting the Observance of the Sabbath.²⁸ Similarly, Joseph Prince Garlick, an early committee member, was a highly respected surgeon, who had been instrumental in establishing the Leeds Public Dispensary, in which, for twenty-eight years between 1824 and 1852, he had "given great service to the poorer classes" by his medical skills. He had also been secretary to the Leeds Bible Society and president of the local Pastoral Aid Society.²⁹ Perhaps the best known figure, at least to present-day historians, was Dr. Samuel Smiles, who served the Society as secretary for a period; his efforts on behalf of sobriety, respectability and self-help need no further mention here.³⁰ Several other notable citizens of Leeds, although not actively involved within the Society, gave it their blessing with donations of money or through appearance on the platform at concerts. The vicar of Leeds, the Revd. W. F. Hook, was perhaps the most distinguished of this supporting group. Overall, it seems that no one political party or religious group dominated the Society. The five clergymen noted above included three Anglicans, a Baptist and a Unitarian, while the political complexion was equally mixed, Hope Shaw being a Whig, Garlick a Conservative and Smiles a radical.³¹ "Rational Recreation", it appears, was an area in which the middle and upper classes of virtually all persuasions could find common ground.

²⁷ See *Leeds Mercury*, 21 Feb. 1852, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 30 Oct. 1852 and 25 Aug. 1855, for details of committee at various stages. William White's *Directory of the Clothing District*, 1853, was used to discover committee members' occupations. Interestingly, there were four clergymen on the committee in 1852, but none three years later. Perhaps the local clergy saw their role in this matter as being that of initiator rather than organiser?

²⁸ See C. S. Spence, *Memoirs of Eminent Men of Leeds* (Leeds, 1868), 65-7.

²⁹ J. P. Garlick (1793-1865). His obituary appears in *Leeds Intelligencer*, 10 June 1865.

³⁰ Apart from writing *Self-Help*, Smiles was active in a variety of improvement associations and suchlike during his time in Leeds between 1838 and 1854. See R. J. Morris, "The History of Self-Help", *New Society*, 3 Dec. 1970.

³¹ Also closely involved in the Society in the late 1850s was Alderman R. M. Carter, who had been active in the Leeds Chartist movement.

The People's Concerts

Between 1852 and 1859 the Leeds Rational Recreation Society sponsored 124 concerts, several brass band performances in the summer of 1855 and more frequently in 1856, when it arranged a series in opposition to the Sunday Band Concerts organised by local secularists. The Society also gave some financial support to eight privately-sponsored concerts in 1855, when its treasurer absconded with the funds, causing temporary cessation of its own activities.³² The concerts, which were initially held fortnightly, but eventually became weekly events, usually took place on a Saturday night, although occasional efforts were made to organise concerts on Mondays or Thursdays, to enable shopworkers and others employed on a Saturday night to attend. The season usually ran from October to May; originally it was hoped that open-air band concerts would fill the summer gap, but, as has been noted, this only happened in exceptional circumstances. The concerts took place in the Albion Street Music Hall, which was at the time the largest hall available in Leeds.³³ Admission prices were usually set at 3d., 6d., and 1s., although it was occasionally necessary, notably during the Society's financial crisis of 1855, to raise the minimum price to 6d.³⁴ It was widely assumed that the 3d. charge would allow even the "humblest mechanic" to attend, while the 1s. seats were intended for the wealthier classes, whose support would give the concerts much needed financial backing, as well as serving to bring the different classes of society into some form of contact.³⁵

The great bulk of the music offered to the audience was vocal. This was the result of financial as much as musical policy, for Leeds possessed no formally-constituted orchestra, and the hiring of musicians from other cities would have proved extremely costly. In general, the standard of the performers employed was relatively high, with the committee drawing largely upon a small nucleus of local professional singers, supplemented by one, or perhaps two, visiting "stars" at each concert. The two most popular, and probably in their different ways the best, performers to make regular appearances were

³² This desperately embarrassing event was kept as quiet as possible by the committee which did not like to admit that a society founded to teach morality to the working classes should itself be guilty of improper conduct. For details of the treasurer's disappearance, along with £169, see *Leeds Intelligencer*, 30 Oct. 1855.

³³ See K. J. Bonser, *The Music Hall, Albion Street* (typescript in Leeds City Reference Library), for details of the building and its history.

³⁴ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 30 Oct. 1855.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Supplement, 6 May 1854.

Signor Delavanti, a singer of comic songs and *opéra bouffe*, who, despite his Italian pretensions, in fact hailed from Manchester, and Mrs. Sunderland, the legendary "Yorkshire Queen of Song". Mrs. Sunderland (1819-1905) was undoubtedly the most popular and gifted female vocalist that Yorkshire produced in the nineteenth century, a soprano good enough to sing solo parts at music festivals and concerts throughout the country and to give a Royal Command performance before Queen Victoria.³⁶ The Leeds Rational Recreation Society's attempt to give the working classes frequent opportunity to hear such a celebrated singer must rank as one of its most significant philanthropic and artistic achievements.

While solo vocalists dominated proceedings, the Leeds Madrigal and Motet Society, an amateur choral society conducted by William Spark, appeared relatively regularly, thus adding much needed variety to the concerts. There was also an attempt to introduce a series of musical and literary lectures, although they never became a regular feature of the Society's programme.³⁷

The typical concert involved a mixture of material encompassing Italian, English and sometimes French opera, glees, ballads, and a considerable amount of comic song drawn largely from the repertoire of the American, Samuel Lover, and John Liptrot Hatton, an English composer who enjoyed quite considerable fame in the mid-Victorian period. The following programme was offered to the citizens of Leeds by the Leeds Rational Recreation Society in April 1855. On this occasion Hatton was present in person, and his music received an unusual amount of attention. Nevertheless, this programme does exemplify the kind of music available to audiences at these concerts.³⁸

Madame D'Anteny	<i>Son Vergin Vezossa,</i> from "I Puritani"	Bellini
	<i>Sing Not Thy Song To Me</i> <i>Sweet Bird</i>	Glover
Madame D'Anteny & Mr Hatton	<i>La Ci Darem La Mano,</i> from "Don Giovanni"	Mozart
Madame D'Anteny & Miss Brown	<i>Sweet Sister Fay</i>	Barnett

³⁶ See W. Smith, *Old Yorkshire*, Series 2, Vol. 2 (1890), 235-8, for an outline of her career.

³⁷ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 26 March 1853, gives a report of a reading of *Macbeth*, by Henry Nicholls. Like most of these lectures, it was only moderately attended.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 23 April 1853. There were other songs in the programme which the reporter did not note.

Mr Hatton	<i>The Little Fat Man</i>	Hatton
	<i>Day and Night</i>	Hatton
	<i>O Ruddier Than The Cherry</i>	Handel
Leeds Madrigal & Motet Society	<i>Sailors Beware</i>	Hatton
Miss Brown	<i>O Preserve and Bless the Queen</i>	Wallace

It is significant that the Leeds Rational Recreation Society was content to use the accepted repertoire of the period, and made no attempt to encourage either the performance or the composition of songs with a specific “moral” message. In this, it reflected the dominant tendency of nineteenth-century musical philanthropy. While certain bodies, notably those connected with temperance organisations, and some bodies dealing specifically with children, made definite attempts to develop an alternative repertoire, most purveyors of “Music for the People” felt that the existing musical stock was quite adequate. This was perhaps wise policy, for one wonders how many people would have listened, even if it had been Mrs. Sunderland singing such refrains as:

’Tis cocoa, cocoa, a steaming cup of cocoa,
 ’Twill warm your hands and cheer your hearts,
 I tell you what I think;
 Like cocoa, cocoa, we ought to make life’s yoke, oh,
 As pleasant bright and good for all, as this refreshing drink.³⁹

Similarly, the Leeds Society appears to have taken a surprisingly casual attitude to the material performed at their concerts. It was surely a little strange that an organisation openly dedicated to the undermining of the public house should allow Signor Delavanti to perform, as regularly as he did, as open a hymn to the delights of alcohol as Hatton’s *Simon the Cellarer*:⁴⁰

Old Simon the cellarer keeps a rare store,
 Of Malmsey and Malvoisie,
 And Cyprus, and who can say how many more?
 For a chary old soul is he
 For a chary old soul is he.

Of Sack and Canary he never doth fail,
 And all the year round there is brewing of ale;

³⁹ *Musical Times*, June 1879, quotes this gem from E. Cympton, *Temperance Songs For Older Children*.

⁴⁰ *The Star Folio of The Hundred and One Best Songs* (London, n.d.), 98-9, gives the full words and music of this Victorian classic.

Yet he never aileth, he quaintly doth say,
While he keeps to his sober six flagons a day.

But ho! ho! ho! His nose doth show,
How oft the black jack to his lips doth go.
But ho! ho! ho! His nose doth show
How oft the black jack to his lips doth go.

Once again, this is clear evidence of the prevailing view that music *per se*, provided it was heard in the “correct” environment, was a valuable weapon in the battle for the working-class mind, almost regardless of its libretto.

According to the Recreation Society, a “correct” environment had two essential ingredients. First, there had to be a total absence of the immorality associated with the music-hall and the public house. At the beginning of the 1852 concert series the Revd. G. M. Conder extolled in a letter to the *Leeds Intelligencer* the moral superiority of the “people’s concert” over the public-house concert:

An opportunity now occurs for [the working class] to wipe away the stigma which their encouragement of certain places of resort has affixed to them. And it is in their power to show that if there are some who seek the company of drunkards and prostitutes under the pretence of hearing music, there are others, and a yet more numerous party, who can enjoy music all the more that it can be had in an atmosphere of moral purity suitable to the proper enjoyment of such a gift.⁴¹

Alongside this, the Society stressed the importance of the working class and the middle class mingling in the same building. Although termed “people’s concerts”, it was never intended that these events should attract only the working classes. Both in order to raise money, and to encourage class collaboration, the organisers stressed that the concerts should bring together members of the whole community. The organisers expected great results to flow from the presence of different social classes in the same building, even if the various groups were to a large extent separated from each other according to the cost of their tickets. John Hope Shaw gave voice to this belief in 1857, when at the closing concert he argued that it was “impossible that all classes of society could mingle with each other week after week, as at these concerts, without feeling their mutual regard for each other strengthened and confirmed”. The mayor, Alderman John Botterill, took this theme further, introducing hints of emulation and social mobility:

⁴¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 1 May 1852.

Of the importance of this society, no one who employs a large number of workmen could doubt. No workmen could attend these concerts without having his taste refined, for no one could mingle amongst those moving in a higher sphere to himself, without such results, and without his ambition being excited to attain a position not less elevated and respected. Hear, hear. It was to feelings such as these that in a great measure they owed the great prosperity and commercial eminence of this country.⁴²

It is perhaps significant that this particular aspect of the Society's philosophy appears to have become more explicit as the 1850s progressed, forming part of that great middle-class sigh of relief as the Chartist threat faded, and it really began to seem possible that a stable culture might be established. Locked together through their mutual love of music, master and man were to enter a new age of contented partnership.

Lest the audiences should not appreciate exactly what was being attempted by the Society, they were regularly subjected to speeches by the Society's leading members and supporters. Indeed the interval or pre-concert speech became the Leeds Rational Recreation Society's major weapon in the attempt to inculcate "suitable" ideas into the working-class mind. At virtually every performance in the first season at least one local dignitary rose to make a plea for enhanced morality, sobriety and refinement, and, although such orations became slightly less frequent as the decade progressed, the final concert in each season was always reserved for a veritable flood of sermonising.

But all the exhortation in the world would have been of no avail unless the working classes actually attended the concerts. The Society had absolutely no doubt that they were coming, and coming in large numbers. Hope Shaw trumpeted delightedly at the end of the first season that "he could not anticipate the great and marked encouragement, which up to the sixth and last, they had received at the hands of the working classes", and a year later, he spoke of audiences being "composed in great measure, by those classes for whom the amusements were intended – the working classes".⁴³ In general, the local press was equally enthusiastic about working-class attendance, although aware that their number was perhaps a little lower than the zealous Hope Shaw implied. Commenting on audience attendance in the 1855-56 season, the *Leeds Intelligencer* observed that "the 'people', for whose special benefit the concerts were established, have invariably supported the entertainments and crowded the gallery – a

⁴² *Leeds Intelligencer*, 2 May 1857, for these speeches. For similar sentiments see *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 Feb. 1852, 17 May 1856 and 17 April 1858.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1853.

fact which would indicate that if there was a larger space for the lowest price, the working classes themselves would probably make the concerts pay".⁴⁴ The only contemporary attempt at *statistical* analysis of audience content was that provided by James Hole, the Leeds adult education pioneer, who claimed that the concerts, in similar manner to the Mechanic's Institutes, had "reached mainly the middle classes and those in social positions immediately above the operative classes". This interpretation was based upon the pattern of ticket sales over the period 1853 to 1858. Between these years, 89,576 people attended the concerts with 26 per cent buying seats at 3d., 41 per cent at 6d. and 33 per cent at 1s.⁴⁵ Hole obviously assumed that the working classes were only able to afford the 3d. seats, but, while his belief that the 3d. gallery seat was the normal location of the working-class audience was largely correct, there were probably at least some lower-class patrons in the more expensive seats. Working men were prepared to go to extraordinary expense in order to fulfil their recreational desires – membership of the Stalybridge Old Brass Band cost £3 10s. in the early 1840s, to give a slightly extreme but far from untypical example – and there were probably some working-class musical enthusiasts in Leeds who felt it was worth the outlay of 6d. or perhaps even 1s. to hear as noted a singer as Mrs. Sunderland.⁴⁶ At the same time, it is possible that local industrialists supplied their workmen with free tickets for the more expensive seats, something which certainly happened at similar functions in West Yorkshire throughout the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Obviously, we cannot measure the size of the working-class audience exactly, but, given these two provisos, it is best that Hole's 26 per cent should be seen as a minimum figure.

Using his figures as they stand, we can at least obtain a very approximate estimate of the working-class contingent. If 89,576 people attended 124 concerts, this gives an average attendance of about 720, which by Hole's evaluation implies that roughly 180 working people took up the Society's weekly alternative to the delights of the Casino and the public house. It is clearly not possible to estimate total working-class attendance over the whole period. It seems safe to assume, however, that the same group of people did not attend every

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 8 Dec. 1855.

⁴⁵ James Hole, *Light, More Light: On the Present State of Education amongst the Working Classes of Leeds and How It Can Best be Improved* (1860), 118-20, 155.

⁴⁶ On Stalybridge Band, see *British Bandsman*, 4 April 1914.

⁴⁷ For example, certain Bradford masters gave substantial numbers of tickets to their employees so that they might attend concerts at the Bradford Music Festival of 1859. See *Leeds Mercury*, 28 Aug. 1859.

week, but that neither was there a different audience for every concert. Overall, it would surely not be too optimistic to suggest that during the course of their existence the Leeds Rational Recreation Society concerts attracted the attention of at least several thousand working men and women.

Despite all these mathematical gymnastics, it is not possible to pinpoint which sectors of the working classes attended the concerts. It is, however, tempting to suggest that the majority of working men who attended would have been drawn largely from the upper echelons of the labouring classes. Even the 3d. seats would have been prohibitive for those at the "bottom end" of the working population. It is perhaps significant that, when discussing the social composition of those occupying the cheaper seats, both the Rational Recreation Society and the local press tended to use "artisan" as their most frequent descriptive term. Obviously there is a certain looseness about this term, for some mid Victorians used it both to describe what we might now call "working class" as a whole, and also as a description of, particularly, the skilled working classes. It is likely, however, that in this context, the spokesmen of the Society used the term to denote skilled workers. Like so many attempts at rational recreation, the popular concert appears not to have attracted the semi- and unskilled working class, the very social groups who arguably needed its benefits more than most. In their recreation as much as in their political life, then, the lower working class were separated from the skilled working class, and divisions within the "working class" were thus made even sharper.⁴⁸

Influence of the Leeds Rational Recreation Society

As one historian has recently argued, "implementing the new regimen of rational recreation was a difficult business".⁴⁹ Despite all the enthusiastic claims of success that came from within the reformers' camp, it is clear that the Society had in no way transformed working-class culture in the way it had intended. Working-class attendance, although quite reasonable, was tiny when compared to the numbers who visited the types of institution that the Society had set out to destroy. It is only too clear that the concerts had little or no effect on either the public house or the nascent music hall. By the mid 1860s, in fact, Leeds had at least three halls of the Casino variety, and this ever-growing industry could smile in triumph at the rational

⁴⁸ For the suggestion that recreation helped to drive wedges between various sections of the working classes, see B. Harrison, "Religion and Recreation in the Nineteenth Century", *Past and Present* (1967), 121.

⁴⁹ Bailey, *Leisure*, 171.

recreationists.⁵⁰ Paradoxically, the Leeds Rational Recreation Society may even have aided the music hall's development. The "People's Concerts" gave considerable publicity to what was soon to become the backbone of music hall entertainment: the comic song. Although the people's concert comic song and the music hall comic song were somewhat different, it was perhaps not such a great step both in terms of music and lyrics from *The Low Back'd Car*, *Allister McAllister* ("with the imitation of the bagpipes, which again excited the risible faculties of the audience to no small extent"), or *Simon the Cellarer* sung by Signor Delavanti, to *Champagne Charlie* sung by George Leybourne.⁵¹ The Society may well have been creating an appetite that could best be met by attendance at the music hall, and thus, rather than killing it at birth, was helping to ensure its survival.

But it would have been extremely unrealistic to expect that the Leeds Rational Recreation Society could have made an impact of the type its members envisaged. Even if the working classes had attended the concerts in greater numbers than they did, events which were at the most held on 20 to 25 days in the year would have had minimal impact on the power of the ubiquitous public house. It took a century of social change to challenge the place of drink in popular culture, and, as has been eloquently pointed out by Professor Harrison, the direct efforts of reformers formed only one aspect of the challenge and not always a very successful one.⁵² If the Society's spokesmen genuinely believed some of their claims about the potential of the concert movement, then it is illustrative of the inability of middle-class reformers at that time to comprehend the role of the public house and its offshoots in working-class life.⁵³

But despite the presence in Leeds of the "modest activity and utopian rhetoric" that Professor Tholfsen has found so common a feature of rational recreation enterprise,⁵⁴ there were undoubtedly many small, yet, within the context of local society significant, ways in

⁵⁰ On the development of the music hall in Leeds, see G. J. Mellor, *Northern Music Hall* (1970). By 1865, the Leeds public could attend the Casino, under its new name of the *Amphitheatre*, the *Princess Palace*, opened in 1864 and the *White Swan Varieties*, which, as the *City Varieties*, still operates today.

⁵¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 22 May 1852. Leybourne (1842-84) was one of the "Lion Comiques", the first set of music hall comedians to become genuine stars. Dressed in expensive clothes and clasp bottles of champagne, they attempted to satirise the "swells" of the day.

⁵² B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (1971).

⁵³ In all probability, their enthusiastic statements are more a reflection of the florid style of much Victorian rhetoric than anything else.

⁵⁴ T. Tholfsen, *Working-Class Radicalism in mid-Victorian England* (1976), 205.

which the activities of the Leeds Rational Recreation Society exerted an influence which, in the long run, may have helped create the type of society that they hoped for. Of fundamental importance was the reformers' belief that they *were* succeeding in influencing the habits of the working classes. The limits of their achievement are clear enough in hindsight, but at the time they were proud of their work. "The committee", the audience was informed on one occasion, "were satisfied that the movement had had a very important influence upon the artisan class of the town, many of whom had expressed the obligation they were under to the founders of the society for the opportunity afforded them of gratifying their musical aspirations, apart from the demoralizing influence of the Casino and the beer-house".⁵⁵ At the same time, the Society was clearly impressed by the audiences' standard of behaviour. There were, admittedly, occasional disasters. In 1858 the Society hired a certain Miss Clara Seyton, whose dramatic entertainment, *The Omnibus, or a Touch at the Times*, fell well below the standard the audience expected, and both she and Edwin Dray, one of the Society's organisers, were given an extremely hostile reception. This apparently greatly upset Mr. Dray, who wrote to the *Leeds Mercury* condemning the hissing and booing that had greeted him.⁵⁶ But overall, the Society and the middle classes of Leeds in general, through the reports of the concerts in the local press, gained a sympathetic view of the working class, whose "good order and decorum" marked the majority of the concerts.⁵⁷

It is likely that it was in this way that the concerts did succeed in influencing class relations in Leeds. The Society had initially intended that, by mingling with their betters at the concerts, the working classes would be suitably "elevated". In fact, it seems that it was the *middle* classes who found the events a socially educative experience. Through their actions, those members of the working classes who attended perhaps helped to persuade their "betters", in exactly the way that the Crystal Palace Exhibition had done on a national scale, that the lower orders were not after all beyond redemption, and in fact gave plentiful cause for optimism. In this specifically local situation, rational recreation helped to contribute to the establishment of an "age of equipoise".

There is very little concrete evidence as to whether the working classes themselves imbibed the political ideology that the reformers attempted to impose upon them. It is difficult to believe that the con-

⁵⁵ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 6 May 1854.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1858.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 June 1852.

certs would have done anything to alter the attitude of those working men who already possessed a heightened sense of class consciousness, while, at the same time, they may actually have served to promote antagonism. It must have been obvious that despite all the Society's protestations the concerts were essentially a reflection of the undeniable class basis of Victorian society: the whole idea of a "People's Concert" implied a second-class citizenship in both a musical and a wider sense, underlining that there were concerts to which the working classes could not go. Yet, despite this clear limitation, it is still possible that the Rational Recreation Society had some success in winning a certain degree of working-class support and respect.

First, the Society was making a relatively strenuous effort to add to the stock of popular recreation in a period when working-class leisure pursuits, especially in the larger urban areas, was still somewhat limited, and indeed at a time when much popular entertainment was under vigorous attack. Traditional pastimes such as cockfighting, bull-baiting and football were continually being reduced by a combination of repression and social change, and these forms had not always been replaced by alternative activity. At least the Society was attempting to replace some of the things which the middle classes – including some of the Society's own members – had taken away.⁵⁸ Most important in this context was the fact that the Society was offering a form of activity which had a considerable interest for the working classes; in no sense was it attempting to impose an alien culture. As has already been noted, there was a vigorous working-class musical culture in Leeds in the 1850s, and the people's concerts provided the musical enthusiast with an opportunity to enjoy his chosen pastime, while at the same time quite possibly implanting an interest in music amongst some of those previously untouched by musical activity. The music that the Society offered fitted extremely well into the existing musical culture of Leeds and its environs. Italian operatic selections were becoming common in the local brass band repertoire from the very late 1840s, while the glees and part-songs that enjoyed such prominence at the concerts were long established in the vocal repertoire of local choral societies and singing clubs. It may even have been the case that composers such as Bellini, Bishop and Balfe were also a part of the local public house and music hall singing tradition. Operatic selections formed part of the programmes in early London music halls, and it is

⁵⁸ For the suggestion that the emergence of rational alternatives may have helped to take some of the sting out of the attack on popular leisure, see Bailey, *Leisure*, 25-7.

quite possible that the same was true in Leeds.⁵⁹ (Unfortunately, reformers such as Stalker tended to be specific only in their criticism of the venue; the exact content of the Casino's entertainment was never really referred to.)

At the same time as meeting the tastes of the local musical public, the Rational Recreation Society was also extending the popular musical culture of the region. The Rational Recreation Society tended to make much of its achievement in "exciting a more general love of music amongst the working classes", and, although this was something of an overstatement, it did provide the first sustained opportunity for those of limited income, whether they be working or "lower middle" class, to attend the concert hall in relatively sizable numbers. The *Halifax Guardian*, writing about a series of popular concerts held in Halifax in 1854, claimed that a "new class" of concert-goer had been created, and the same could be claimed of Leeds at this time. The People's Concert movement added a new element to the musical experience of the working classes, and there were undoubtedly many who were grateful for the opportunity, even if, as in the case of the "working man" who wrote on behalf of his twenty workmates, they would have enjoyed it even more "if there had been a band".⁶⁰

As a result of experiencing the cultural philanthropy of the Rational Recreation Society, it is possible that some working men, particularly those who were already tempted by the idea of an alliance with the middle classes, were seduced by the combination of middle-class benevolence and self-congratulation that flowed from the stage of the Albion Street Music Hall during the course of the endless speechifying. As Professor Tholfsen has pointed out, there was always a possibility that some working men would accept the rhetoric of middle-class philanthropists at face value, accepting the claim that improvement was happening for everybody, and thus accepting the mid-Victorian social system. "In accepting these cultural patterns working men also tended to accept the legitimacy of the social roles and presuppositions that were interwoven with them".⁶¹ By going some way toward meeting the needs of working men, and by going to such determined lengths to publicise its activities, the Rational Recreation Society may well have succeeded in helping to build one of those tenuous but vital links that held classes together in the period between 1850 and 1875.

⁵⁹ For the performance of operatic selections in early music halls, see Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music*, 33. Although from the 1860s the operatic selection became less common in the music hall programme, it remained standard procedure for the music hall orchestra to play an operatic overture at the beginning of the evening.

⁶⁰ *Halifax Guardian*, 18 Feb. 1854.

⁶¹ T. Tholfsen, *op. cit.*, 244.

By surviving in all for six-and-a-half years, and by making a sustained effort even during times of severe financial difficulty, the Rational Recreation Society catered not merely for contemporaries but at the same time helped to found a tradition of popular concert life that was to benefit the musical enthusiasts of Leeds at least until the outbreak of the First World War. Popular concerts were established at the newly opened Town Hall in 1859 and supplemented from 1861 by free organ recitals, also held in the Town Hall, which on occasions drew extremely large audiences. In the early twentieth century, these organ performances were expanded into full-scale orchestral concerts, featuring complete symphonies, including works previously not performed in the north of England. Leeds enjoyed a record in this area of social life approached by only a small number of cities, and the Rational Recreation Society can take a certain amount of the credit for helping to establish such a strong tradition.⁶²

At first sight, the specialised and highly localised activities of organisations such as the Leeds Rational Recreation Society tend to appear as rather parochial, obscure, perhaps even irrelevant, when viewed within the total context of nineteenth-century history. But initial impressions can be misleading. Such organisations *are* worth studying because they show in microcosm the themes which were to become of central importance in mid-Victorian society, as the middle classes attempted to come to grips with the new “problems” of popular recreation and popular politics. The fear of the public house, and of the leisure entrepreneur (the man who was profiting by selling entertainment for entertainment’s sake to the working class) in particular, the call for moral elevation of the working classes and the demand for class collaboration, are all present, not simply in the history of Leeds, but in the history of Britain as a whole during this period. At the same time, modest as the achievements of the Leeds Rational Recreation Society are, they take on a much greater significance when added to similar achievements of other organisations in other cities.

Although failing both to destroy the power of drink in working-class culture and to bring about the full-scale class consensus that it so passionately urged, the Leeds Rational Recreation Society, along with

⁶² The culmination of the tradition came in the early years of the twentieth century, with a series of orchestral concerts, held under municipal auspices at Leeds Town Hall, from 1902 to 1909. For these, see the collection of programmes in Leeds Public Library, Reference Section. For Leeds’s reputation as a centre for musical education through the municipal concert, see W. J. Galloway, *op. cit.*, 53-5. Unfortunately, the concerts did not long survive the election of a thrifty Conservative Council, in 1909.

similar groups in many other locations, made several contributions which helped reshape popular culture in a manner acceptable to the middle classes. It helped to persuade the middle classes that the working classes were not so threatening as they had previously thought, persuaded a number of working men that the middle class might have something to offer to the working classes and, in an albeit often patronising way, made a solid effort to broaden the musical culture of the working class. In the final analysis, it is tempting to see such experiments in musical and other aspects of cultural philanthropy as being substantially more successful than has previously been appreciated.

WILLIAM VAVASOUR: THE SQUIRE OF WESTON, 1798-1833¹

by
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“... a worthy Vavasour”

An inscription in Weston church, near Otley, states that the Vavasour family “is lineally descended from John le Vavasour, younger brother of Sir Malger le Vavasour, Kt., of Hazelwood near Tadcaster”. John le Vavasour married the daughter of Sir Robert de Stopham, lord of the manor of Weston, and, when the Stopham line failed in the middle of the fourteenth century, the Weston estates passed to the descendants of this marriage. At that time the property comprised the manors of Weston and Newton (in the parish of Nidd), and other land in Burley-in-Wharfedale and Baildon. The Baildon property was sold in 1706 and that at Newton in 1795, and on the death of William Vavasour in 1833 the estate, “all and every my manors, messuages, cottages, farms, lands, tithes, tenements and hereditaments and real estates whatsoever, in Weston, Askwith and Newhall-with-Clifton”,² passed to his nephew William Elmsall Carter.

William Vavasour (1770-1833) was the last Vavasour at Weston;³ probably the name derived originally from the office of king’s valvasor. Chaucer used the title to describe the Franklin, or Freeman, in the *Canterbury Tales*: “an householder and great was he . . . was nowhere such a worthy vavasour”, and Skeat has defined it in this context as a “sub-vassal, next in dignity to a baron”.⁴ It has been suggested that this plain country fellow, a “burel”⁵ man, as he described himself, who functioned as a knight of his shire and sometimes a sheriff, may have

¹ This study, undertaken as part of a B.Ed. (Hist.) Hons. course, is based upon the eight volumes of William Vavasour’s diaries, now lodged in Leeds City Archives. I should like to thank Lt. Col. H. V. Dawson, for making this material available to the general public; Mr. Connor and the staff of the Archives Department at Sheepscar, for their help and courtesy; and Mr. R. Petty, for his interest, advice and encouragement.

² Probate copy of will. Leeds City Archives (hereafter L.C.A.), Weston Hall MS. 420.

³ The name has since been adopted by a branch of the family which lived, until recently, at Weston Manor, near Otley.

⁴ W. W. Skeat, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (7 vols., 1894-7), V, 35.

⁵ Dressed in rough woollen clothes. Skeat, *op. cit.*, 335.

been the forerunner of that unique and characteristic product, the English country squire.⁶ With an income of between one thousand and three thousand pounds a year, William Vavasour was one of a group of three to four thousand such men who together owned some 50 or 60 per cent of the total cultivated land in England and Wales at the end of the eighteenth century.⁷ The eight diaries of William Vavasour,⁸ spanning the years from 1797 to 1827, together with some correspondence and related documents, give a valuable insight into the life of a country gentleman. Such accounts are all too rare; as one writer has commented: "the pattern of eighteenth-century landownership has been largely traced from the muniment rooms of Woburn, Chatsworth, Wentworth Woodhouse and their like. It is comparable to writing a history of Parliament without looking beyond the confines of the cabinet. For the great estate was not typical . . . [yet] evidence available for the smaller estate owners tends to be meagre".⁹ Like the Buckinghamshire squire portrayed in *The Purefoy Letters*,¹⁰ Vavasour functioned basically on three distinct levels. A large proportion of his time was devoted to the management of the estate from which he derived the bulk of his income. As the leading citizen of the parish, he was involved continually in the affairs of the townships of Weston and Askwith. Finally, as a Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding, he was expected to transact justice business, act at Quarter Sessions, and sit on the Grand Jury.

The period spanned by the diaries is one of particular interest in the history of English landed society and that of the country as a whole. During the eighteenth century the ownership of land was the supreme guarantee of power and social influence; "landed property was the foundation . . . of society, . . . the landed interest was at the height of its power".¹¹ Investment in commerce, emergent industry, or government funds could be equally profitable, but an income from these sources conferred no comparable social status. It was estimated at the time that as many as three-quarters of English families derived their main income directly or indirectly from the land: "agriculture was the only great prime mover of the economy and . . . most of the nation's in-

⁶ E. Wingfield-Stratford, *The Squire and his Relations* (1956), 11.

⁷ G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1963), 26.

⁸ L.C.A., Weston Hall MS. 445 (1797), 398 (1798-1827).

⁹ R. G. Wilson, "Three Brothers: a Study of the Fortunes of a Landed Family", *Journal of the Bradford Textile Society* (1964-5), 111.

¹⁰ *The Purefoy Letters, 1735-53* [Letters of Elizabeth Purefoy], ed. L. G. Mitchell (1973).

¹¹ Mingay, *op. cit.*, 3, 10.

dustry was processing materials drawn from the harvests of crop, beast or timber or in some way directly serving those harvests".¹² The dependence of so large a proportion of the population upon land for its living generated a deep and healthy respect for the value of landed property, and procured for landowners the pre-eminent position in society and the virtual monopoly of government at local and national level.

William Vavasour inherited the estate in 1798, when the social and political hegemony of the landowning classes appeared to be more firmly entrenched than ever, and "the traditional and established order made good economic and political sense, though intellectually it was by no means unchallenged".¹³ In reality, however, the eighteenth century had seen the beginning of fundamental social and economic change which would gradually undermine and finally destroy the dominance of the landed interest. The growth of population, as of industry and commerce, had already begun to shift the balance of the economy and alter the pattern of society. Agriculture, by 1800, was declining in relative importance, although it remained the largest single occupation of the people. The share of the landed interest in the total national income was falling: the commercial and industrial classes were expanding rapidly and beginning to assert themselves in terms of wealth and property, a trend accelerated during the war years, when there was every incentive, if not security, for manufacturing and business enterprise.

England was at war with revolutionary and Napoleonic France, with one brief respite, from 1793 until 1815. The effect of the wars was to stir up dissatisfaction with the existing forms of government, which led ultimately to political change, and to disrupt the normal functioning of the economy. The "anti-Jacobin" reaction and the violent disturbances of economic life engendered thus were reflected in the rejection of reform by the ruling classes, the use of repressive legislation, and the harsh and unsympathetic treatment of the poor. Social distress was particularly acute in the post-war period, and affected almost every section of the community in some way or another.

William Vavasour's thirty-five years at Weston coincided with the watershed of the history of landed society in England and Wales. Over twenty years of war brought agriculture to an unprecedented peak of prosperity, but the Corn Law of 1815 was evidence of the need for defence against the threat to the landed classes' economic supremacy.

¹² P. Matthias, "The Social Structure in the Eighteenth Century: a calculation by Joseph Massie", *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, X (1957), 30-45; Mingay, *op. cit.*, 4.

¹³ F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (1963), 2.

The year before he died saw the passing of the first Reform Act, which, by enfranchising the middle classes, weakened the political supremacy of the landlords.

Home and leisure

Weston Hall, an elegant Tudor house, lies two miles north of Otley, and across the river Wharfe from Burley. In 1815, William Vavasour wrote in his diary, "Dr. Whitaker, who is publishing a new edition of Thoresby's history of Leeds called with Mr. Taylor the architect to see if there were any antiquities in the Church or about my house worth their notice" [19 July 1815]. In the book the house is described briefly as "consisting of a centre and two deep embayed windows, of the latter end of Queen Elizabeth's time In the garden is a very large and highly-finished casino or banquetting house of the same date . . . bearing on several shields the arms of Vavasour and [Saville of] Stanley".¹⁴ Neale's *Views* gave a slightly more elaborate account of it; the present house had been erected at different periods, and several parts of it were Elizabethan. The casino had been built by Sir Malger le Vavasour, and the author had seen the portraits of the knight and his lady, with the date 1588 upon them, in Mr. William Vavasour's dining room.¹⁵

Denton Park, the seat of Sir Henry Carr-Ibbetson, was four miles away towards Ilkley, and Farnley Hall, the home of Walter Ramsden Fawkes, was a similar distance away in the opposite direction. The Fawkeses, like the Vavasours, were highly regarded and respected in Yorkshire. Their connection with Farnley dated back to the thirteenth century. In 1696 William Vavasour's great-grandfather married Mary, the daughter of Thomas Fawkes of Farnley, and the two families appear to have been on close terms of friendship for many years. William Vavasour's eldest brother had been christened Walter Ayscough Fawkes, presumably on that account. On the death of Francis Fawkes in 1786, the Farnley estate, with the surname and arms of Fawkes, passed to a cousin, Walter Ramsden Hawksworth of Hawksworth. The latter's son and namesake was William Vavasour's contemporary, and, initially, his good friend. During this period Walter Fawkes became one of J. M. W. Turner's chief patrons, and the artist spent a considerable amount of time at Farnley. Unfortunately William Vavasour fell out with Walter Fawkes in 1800, the quarrel only being resolved many years later, and his diaries do not record that he ever met Turner.

¹⁴ T. D. Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete* (1816), 204.

¹⁵ John Preston Neale, *Views of the Seats of Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland* (6 vols., 1818-23), V (1822), No. 58.

Leeds was within convenient reach for shopping and banking, and Harrogate afforded the popular and fashionable attractions of a spa resort for those who could not aspire to Bath. Otley was a busy country town with a weekly market of very ancient standing. In his *Directory of Yorkshire* for 1822, Edward Baines commented that “perhaps no other market in the kingdom, in a town of the same size, is at present superior to it in the variety and extent of its business. It is a market and a fair united. Vast quantities of corn are brought here and sold into the manufacturing districts of the South-West, and the populous town of Leeds derives a considerable supply of cattle, sheep and calves from this market”.¹⁶ The town was the hub of the overwhelmingly rural community in the surrounding villages, the home of the free school and the centre where the local gentry gathered to administer justice and local government.

William Vavasour was twenty-eight years old when he became squire of Weston. He had known considerable personal tragedy and financial stringency; orphaned at the age of ten, he noted years later in his diary when recording the death of one James Skirrow in the poor house at Carlton, “he was the son of my late father’s favourite and thriving tenant – upon the death of his parents he had a better fortune than fell to my lot when I first became an orphan, but he spent all in three years and since the end of 1797 has been a vagabond, driving cattle and disgusting from rags, filth and all that is miserable” [31 December 1828]. His eldest brother Walter, a boy of sixteen, inherited the estate under guardianship but survived his father by only seven years. Edward (Ned), the second son, next succeeded to the property, but died in 1798 at the age of thirty after a long and debilitating illness, during which William lived at Weston, nursing his brother and managing his affairs. This had been a trying time; as Ned’s health deteriorated so did his temper, and on at least one occasion it was only fear of the reflection which could be cast upon his character if he left a helpless invalid alone with only servants to care for him that prevented William from leaving home. He also had to bear the brunt of the “pleasant innuendoes” [8 April 1798] from Ned’s wife (who was living apart from her husband at his own request, because he could not bear her to see him ravaged by disease) when, on his brother’s instructions, he refused her persistent demands for more money.

Vavasour’s marriage to Sarah, the daughter of John Cooke, Esquire, of Swinton, south Yorkshire, took place in November 1801 after five months of negotiation. Sarah owned land in Lincolnshire, and

¹⁶ Edward Baines, *Directory of Yorkshire* (1822), I, West Riding.

stood to inherit a considerable fortune from her father. Mr. Cooke inspected the Weston rent roll and discussed money matters with Vavasour, after Sarah had agreed that she had no material objection to the match. The two men “did not exactly coincide in opinion” [21 August 1801], but agreed to leave matters to their attorneys to do the best for all parties. Vavasour expressed himself mortified a few days later at the contents of a letter from his prospective father-in-law, but the marriage settlement was duly drawn up and signed. The bridegroom made his will, bought a wedding ring in Leeds, procured the marriage licence, and at an early morning ceremony “was united in the bonds of holy matrimony with my dear Miss Sarah Cooke at the Parish Church of Wath-upon-Dearne . . . [and] immediately set out for Weston where we arrived before 5 p.m.” [9 November 1801].

The couple spent the next few days receiving a constant stream of visitors and paying social calls. When things quietened down a little, William helped Sarah to mark linen “with particular ink for the purpose” [5 January 1802], took her walking and riding in the gig, and fitted up a stove in the family pew at church for her comfort. At Christmas, after receiving the rents, he and his wife dined with their tenants. His diary for that year concluded on an optimistic note: “Thus endeth the year 1801 and the country under better circumstances than one could look for at the beginning of it. Our enemies in the North have long ago been silenced – we are no longer at war with the French republic, and having been blessed with an abundant harvest the price of corn and potatoes are much reduced within the year – and thank God Mr. Pitt is no longer Prime Minister!” [28 December 1801].

Even before his marriage Vavasour had begun to make repairs and improvements to the house and gardens. A certain amount of modernisation was necessary, not simply because a gentleman’s house was the hallmark of his family’s position and influence in the neighbourhood, but to render the old house more comfortable and convenient. In the winter the cold could be so intense that water in a tumbler froze within an hour or two in a room where a fire was constantly burning, and some of the bedrooms were so draughty they were unbearable to sleep in. The house was also damp; arriving home after a visit to Swinton, Vavasour was angry to find that “our servants had kindly neglected to air either our bed or sitting room” [11 March 1805]. Shortly after the wedding a tremendous gale stripped the roof of slating, broke several windows, and left hardly a dry room in the house. On another occasion snow leaked in through cracks in the leads of the drawing room windows, and ruined the curtains which fortunately were about to be replaced.

The fireplace in the imposing entrance hall was altered and a chimneypiece erected. A new sash window, facing eastward to give better light, was broken out in the dining room. The plasterers and painters came from Leeds to put the house into good decorative condition, new furnishings were bought and old pieces re-upholstered. In 1800 two family portraits,¹⁷ which had been sent to London to be restored, were returned after an absence of two years; perhaps for this reason Vavasour cleaned and varnished other pictures himself, before rearranging them in the newly-decorated dining-room. Outside in the garden a hot-house was assembled and planted with vines, and a flower bed was dug out at the front of the house. Iron gates were put up at the lodge, and the coach road was covered with gravel.

Like most of his contemporaries, William Vavasour was a keen sportsman and rode out almost every day with his dogs and gun. Occasionally he was very successful, as when he recorded his day's bag as "three brace of grouse, a brace of pheasants, a woodcock, three hares and a rabbit" [10 October 1810]. He was not always so accurate; whilst discussing business with a tenant in Askwith one day, he fired at a hare, and admitted that "a shot or two hit John Holmes but he was no worse" [17 January 1809]. To make sure, he visited the man the next day, but finding that he had gone to the mill concluded that he could have been "no great sufferer from the accident" [18 January 1809]. Poachers were a constant source of annoyance to him, but relatively few were ever caught. William England, the gamekeeper, was hard-pressed to curb their activities, even though sometimes he kept watch all night. Often the most he achieved was to shoot their dogs. Vavasour chiefly resented the blatant killing of game by the servant and a tenant of one of his neighbours, Mr. Clifton, which continued after he had brought the matter repeatedly to that gentleman's attention: "William Leuty and Mr. Clifton's servant were shooting today again and close to me. I must give up all thoughts of correcting this evil for I now think that the master with all his pretension to honesty is as bad as any poacher or perhaps thief – for such conduct deserves no better name – when it is seen in a person acting as a magistrate" [29 October 1813].

Vavasour also enjoyed fishing and hare-coursing, but the hunt was his particular love as a young man, and he missed no opportunity of joining the chase with local packs. It was an exhilarating experience to meet the Bradford and Bingley hounds on Otley Chevin at eight in the morning, and to have "an uncommonly fine run of an hour and twenty

¹⁷ Probably the ones referred to by Neale.

minutes without a single check", and to find the fox "taken alive upon the Banks of the Aire, so spent that he was unable to cross the river or even to run further" [21 March 1798]. Vavasour, however, even with his characteristic bent for field sports, was no mere "English Bumpkin Country Gentleman".¹⁸ His diaries are liberally sprinkled with sensitive observations of wild life and natural phenomena; he noticed the dim divers or sparkling fowl upon the pond and river, and the cactus *grandiflorus* flowering in Dob Park. The curious sight of trees retaining their leaves, and many quite green, when snow covered the ground to a considerable depth, was worthy of comment, as was his delight at finding a guinea fowl's nest with forty eggs in it. The sight of a comet, "very distinctly observed" one night in September 1811, and the eclipse of the sun in 1820, were carefully recorded.

The diaries afford ample evidence that Vavasour was a man with a fine grasp of the English language, an apt turn of phrase, and of sardonic humour: "met Sir Henry Ibbetson driving four-in-hand, which with his management I fancied far from being a safe mode of travelling" [18 March 1805]. Unfortunately it is only possible to speculate upon his educational background; he only once referred to a meeting with his old school-master, the Revd. Mr. Hudson. There is some slight evidence to suggest that he may have studied medicine at Edinburgh University, and as the youngest son he may have expected to follow a career. A letter from an attorney to his sister, Mrs. Carter, in 1795, mentioned that William had been in that city before returning to Weston to look after his brother, and spoke of him as "loosing his time sadly in not practising as a physician" if Ned recovered. An early entry in his diary reads "prescribed for and gave medicine to two poor children, a business which I attend to when desired and always practice gratis where poor people are my customers" [24 January 1798]. Visiting the sick in body and mind, recommending purges and blisters or total abstention from wines, spirits and fermented liquors, or inoculating women and children against the cowpox was a regular part of his routine for the rest of his life, whether he was actually medically qualified or merely an interested amateur.

The books in his father's library, and those which he regularly purchased, indicate that the family was well educated and widely read. The collection of over five hundred volumes covered a variety of topics, including history, travel, philosophy, theology, English literature, and

¹⁸ Lord Chesterfield's caustic reference to the fox-hunting squires of the eighteenth century; *The English Scene*, ed. F. A. Wallbank (1941), 135.

the classics. There was an extensive French section, suggesting that someone had done the Grand Tour, and a good selection of textbooks. William Vavasour's own life-long appreciation of the value of good literature is best illustrated by a comment in his diary written when on military service in 1799. Reaching Morpeth after a gruelling march from Tynemouth over roads choked with snow, he settled in his lodgings and "employed my time in my old and invaluable amusement of reading and writing – an officer in and out of quarters without a single acquaintance in the neighbourhood finds the real advantage of keeping friends with his library" [9 April 1799].

William Vavasour and his wife were very interested in art, and took care to visit the Northern Exhibition of pictures when it was held in Leeds. Whilst in London during the summer of 1809 they attended Miss Linwood's exhibition and viewed the display at Somerset House, with which they were disappointed; on a later occasion they called at Solomon's picture shop in Pall Mall. Vavasour's sister, Ellen, was an accomplished artist, and drawing was another of his favourite occupations. Both William and Sarah had their portraits painted by Mr. Schwanfelder, who had been recommended by Mr. Cooke. On one occasion the artist and his family overstayed their welcome at Weston, but made up for it by giving their host "a couple of very pretty pictures, the one of horses, the other dogs" [30 September 1811].

The Vavasours were also fond of music and drama, attending the theatre, the concert, and the opera when they had the opportunity. They went to Leeds to see Mrs. Siddons in *Macbeth*, and when in London saw *Henry IV* at Covent Garden. Whilst staying at Swinton one year they went with a large party to Sheffield to hear "a wonderful instrument composed of trumpets, french horns, bassoons, flutes, clarinets, drums, kettle drums etc. etc., which is kept going by machinery similar to clockwork", and thought the music "uncommonly grand" [12 July 1815]. They took part in the active social round of visits, dinners, balls and occasional race meetings at Pontefract and Doncaster, although Vavasour was not naturally gregarious. A visit to Harrogate "proved uncommonly stupid and I met with nothing worth noting down during the remainder of the week" [14 July 1798]. Some dinner guests, like Mr. and Mrs. Hope, were positively uncongenial; "they were very rich, and she of high birth, but both very dirty" [7 October 1813]. Neither were the races an unmitigated pleasure, for in Doncaster he was "hustled by a set of thieves and had my pocket picked of £11" [26 September 1814].

The Vavasours, unlike the Ibbetsons, could not aspire to an annual visit to Bath and London, but they visited the capital on three

occasions,¹⁹ and also travelled into Derbyshire, Shropshire, Wales and the West Country. The first visit to London was a great success, but after the second they set off homewards to Vavasour's "great satisfaction – very lame with my boot pinching me" [7 June 1811], and the third was a complete disappointment. The sights and experiences of the other journeys are described succinctly in his diaries, and gave him much pleasure in spite of the "bad food and bad beds" of certain inns, for which he demanded a reduction in price, and the condition of the roads, which were either "strong, rough and mean, or sandy, heavy, deep and dirty" [October 1808]. They indulged in the popular diversion of visiting country houses, and admired the gardens and architecture of such celebrated homes as Chatsworth and Plas Newydd. During a visit to the West Country, in June 1816, Vavasour noted the White Horse cut out in the chalk at Cheshill, and the striking number of barrows and tumuli on the Downs; that night they slept at Speenhamland.

Estate and parish

William Vavasour inherited a compact estate, comprising land in Weston, Askwith, Dob Park and Snowden. An Enclosure Act of 1780, passed shortly before his father's death, had settled the ownership of a disputed area in Askwith, and the Vavasours had been awarded 480 acres of common land. The last outlying property in Newton had been sold in 1795, a wise move because a scattered estate was difficult to supervise and administer. By judicious and efficient management, he added a considerable acreage to the property by buying up any land in the vicinity which came onto the market. He enjoyed an annual rental income of between £1,200 and £1,600, which, in addition to some return from investment and the profit derived from the sale of timber and farm produce, supported a comfortable standard of living. Vavasour was an astute businessman and possessed a sound, practical knowledge of farming; he regulated his own accounts and supervised the work of the estate. By dint of careful husbandry he was able to pay off the last money which the estate owed upon mortgage in 1822, and was justifiably "very happy in getting it out of debt, and very thankful that I am able to do it" [15 June 1822].

The domestic household at Weston numbered approximately twelve, and included a footman, cook, housekeeper, groom, gardener and gamekeeper. The landed classes were dependent upon an ample supply of cheap labour to support their whole way of life, and service in

¹⁹ In 1809, 1811 and 1816.

a country house was often the only employment available for the younger sons and daughters of small farmers. The difficulties created by lack of servants was clearly demonstrated to William Vavasour and his wife when they visited Sir William Bagshaw's home. There were "thirteen children and two other visitors, and only one manservant in the house, consequently all was very uncomfortable and very dirty. Their hospitality is such that everybody must be pleased with them yet pity their want of method and arrangement" [7 July 1815].

The main body of servants remained in Vavasour's service for many years, in spite of periodic upsets. The cook was at Weston throughout this entire period, and although her work never provoked comment, her behaviour did on one occasion: "my old cook by leave went to Otley, drank tea at Mr. Wilson's, and came home intoxicated. She would not go to bed with the other servants but remained in the kitchen where she was found in the morning with the small bone of one of her legs broken" [17 June 1820]. Hannah Overend, the housekeeper, tended to "give herself airs in front of the servants" [20 July 1800] and twice gave notice in the early days of her employment before settling down to a lifetime of service at a salary of £15 a year, which earned her a legacy of £300 in her master's will.

The manservants were expected to perform a variety of duties on the home farm and the estate, regardless of their official title. Thus William England, the gamekeeper, might be found stopping a leak in the pond or trimming the summerhouse plantation, in addition to his more usual occupations. He once had the temerity to express "an unjustifiable dissatisfaction at being as he said overworked and without cause gave himself airs which did not become him" [16 June 1803], but apologised two days later. Joseph Pape, the gardener, who came from Keighley in 1802, was sent out with a gentleman who had requested to shoot for an hour or two, and "behaved very ill, shewing him all [the game] he could, and encouraging him to kill all before him" [12 November 1814].

Reliable and honest servants were hard to find, and William Vavasour treated those of proven worth with suitable consideration, ignoring failings wherever possible. He was remarkably forbearing with William England, who "behaved ill and went to his home in a pet because I found fault with the fences not being properly attended to" [24 October 1813], and at other times "behaved so ill that I should not overlook his ingratitude if the ruin of himself and his family were not the almost certain consequence of his leaving my place" [1 July 1815].

Joseph Pape's two predecessors had been dismissed in swift succession, the one for stealing and the other for staying out all night, and

“not conforming with the rules of the family” [26 October 1802]. Vavasour persevered with Joseph, even when he “got drunk on the way back from Leeds and broke the gig to pieces – he and the horses were found late together on the highway at about 11 o’clock at night” [25 February 1808]. Whilst out shooting on one memorable occasion, Joseph tied Sarah’s mare to a loose gate, “which falling upon her legs she ran away with at the great hazard of being killed or her legs broken”. Vavasour was so terribly angry that he “was induced thereby to treat him in such a way which was very unbecoming on my part” [17 September 1812], but nonetheless Joseph retained his position. However, calling at the gardener’s cottage one day to enquire the reason for his absence from work, Vavasour “could get nothing but abuse from his wife” [15 April 1814] and, with his patience at an end, dismissed the man. A month later Joseph “sued for peace and asked to be restored to his place . . . and returned with every promise of good conduct in the future” [27 May 1814].

William Vavasour allowed his servants to entertain their neighbours to supper once a year, and to go and riot at Otley Statute fair. They were sent to the play at Otley quite regularly, and joined in any village celebrations; in 1827 they attended the Sunday School feast. His attitude towards them was paternalistic, and they looked to him for guidance and support. When Joseph Pape wished to marry the daughter of William Atkinson, one of Vavasour’s tenants, he told his employer who then informed the girl’s father of his gardener’s intentions. Vavasour went to the church with the servant girls when they were married, and gave them away. He gave Anne Harrison a gift of £5, more than her annual wages, and allowed Martha and Thomas Lancaster to borrow his gig to visit their friends the day after their wedding.

William Vavasour retained an interest in good servants long after they left his service. Fanny Fox came back to borrow some money and was given £2, which was more than Mr. Moore received “after an unpleasant business of begging”, or “old Snell”, when he “came a-sponging” [20 March 1813]. He was extremely sad to read in the Doncaster paper in 1819 that “Christopher Gale, who carried the letter bag from Cockermouth to Maryport, was sentenced to be hanged for stealing a letter containing bills for £150” [April 1819], for this man had lived with him as groom and postillion for eighteen months several years previously. The death of his old nurse, Fanny Moody, at the age of 82 was also carefully noted in his diary.

Vavasour undoubtedly regarded those servants who gave him loyal and devoted service with greater respect and affection than he reserved

for most of his relations and neighbouring gentry. His grief at the death of his "good and faithful servant Martin Bowling" was very deep. "This was a terrible day of disaster. Bowling had by my leave gone to Bradford for advice about a hand that was affected with a bad eruption and to meet his mother and other relations . . . Just before bedtime a man arrived at Weston with Martin's horse saying that it had fallen with him about a mile on this side of Bradford, and it was thought the poor lad was killed – sent off two men to him immediately. The sad report was true – he died at 4 a.m." [1 October 1820]. Vavasour's attendance at the funeral, which appears to have been a complete departure from his customary practice, was a token of his esteem for Bowling.²⁰ Not long afterwards a sad little note records, "Went, as I did daily, to visit my poor dying gardener Joseph Pape – found him almost gone and he expired before 5 p.m., having been in my service more than twenty years" [30 December 1822].

The squirearchy were amongst the most active of landed proprietors in promoting agricultural improvement during the eighteenth century. Their chief contribution, and one with which William Vavasour can be readily identified, was the development of their estates into a series of compact farms of adequate size, and provided with suitable buildings, which could be leased at a moderate rent; in this way they created the conditions under which more efficient and improved farming could take place. Thus Thomas Simpson was able to grow four acres of rape on a newly cultivated area of Askwith moor, which when threshed "yielded full two lasts which would sell, I was informed, for at least £90 – his Annual rent for the four acres is about 1s. 8d., – i.e. 5d an acre, and this is entirely from my good will, wishing to give every encouragement to the industry of deserving tenants so far as my very limited income and circumstances will allow" [2 August 1819].

William Vavasour's circumstances were indeed limited in comparison with those of his neighbour, Sir Henry Ibbetson, at Denton, who could pay one hundred and even two hundred guineas for a special breed of cow whereas the farmer's usual price was £14 to £20. Nevertheless he worked the home farm with great energy, and took a lively interest in new techniques and farming methods. He talked to John Skirrow about the beneficial effects of manuring, and tried spreading lime to see if it would "correct the coarseness of herbage which cattle refuse to eat" [May 1825]. Whilst away from home he noticed the irrigation of meadows in the West Country, and the

²⁰ The tombstone which Vavasour erected above Bowling's grave in Weston churchyard records his appreciation of the man's loyal service and friendship.

difference which enclosure had made to Lincolnshire wastes: "it has been divided into fields growing very tolerable crops – several good farmhouses erected and extensive plantations are thriving – made what was a dreary ugly waste a very pretty country" [June 1816]. He attended a chemistry lecture in Otley, and a meeting to discuss the improvement in the breed of cattle in the neighbourhood; he himself experimented a little in horse-breeding. As a member of the committee of the Agricultural Society, and serving as both vice-president and president, he took a prominent part in the organisation of regular livestock shows in Otley. These shows and societies, which were instituted in the late eighteenth century by enthusiasts such as Coke of Holkham, were extremely influential in the spread of improved farming. Vavasour acted as a judge of horses at one of the first public shows "for prizes for Bulls, Stallions and Boars", and himself won the premium with a heifer on one occasion.

The estate at Weston comprised approximately nineteen farms, and William Vavasour's diaries contain many references to his relationship with his tenants. Like every landlord, he was concerned to obtain the best income from his land, but it cannot be said that he was motivated entirely by self-interest. There was no room for false sentiment, however; a bad and improvident tenant was a poor investment which no wise landlord could afford to tolerate, but a good, sober and honest farmer was treated with respect and supported when times were bad. The son or a widow of such a tenant was often allowed to continue on a farm, and rents were rarely raised during a tenancy. Vavasour was an efficient landlord, who expected his rents to be paid on time and his wishes to be complied with, but in return he kept farm buildings in good repair, visited the children when they were sick and occasionally entertained them to supper and a dance, and could be relied upon to help a tenant in trouble. In his case, as Mingay suggests was generally true, the motives of self-interest were mixed with paternalism and justice.²¹ It is unlikely that Vavasour expected, and he certainly did not receive, the total subservience of his tenants, but rather there grew up between them a mutual confidence and sense of interdependence. Good tenants, like good servants, were hard to find, and an astute landlord went to some lengths to retain them.

These considerations must be borne in mind when examining William Vavasour's dealings with his tenants, particularly in the early days of his squirearchy. Immediately after his brother died, and again shortly after completing a year's service with the militia, when he was

²¹ Mingay, *op. cit.*, 187.

resuming control of the management of the estate, he gave several tenants notice to quit their farms for an apparently trivial reason or none at all. Thomas Thompson was ordered to leave the day after he had been called to account for failing to keep his promise to send his son to join the newly formed Otley Armed Association in 1798. This amounted to a personal affront, for Vavasour was in command of the Association, and the refusal of his tenants to participate would not enhance his reputation amongst the local gentry. Yet one suspects, since another man was given notice at the same time, that the real reason was not the most obvious, and was concerned with the man's financial viability. In a similar way Eli Burton's "impudent reply" [12 April 1800] to his landlord on being castigated for using Otley mill instead of the one at Weston led to his farm being inspected and found unsatisfactory. David Smith of Lindley was looking for a farm and prepared to pay a better rental. After careful consideration and enquiry into Smith's character, and in spite of Burton's apologies and offer of an increased rent, Vavasour agreed to let Smith have the farm. The man who had been Burton's fellow culprit in the original incident was let off with a lecture, probably because he was a more efficient farmer.

In contrast, John Burnell was a tenant of long-standing with a considerable holding, who was nearing retirement. He and Vavasour had reached an agreement over the sale of a crop of oats when William Bowling, Vavasour's groom, was involved in a fight with Burnell's sons. This resulted in an argument between the two men. Shortly afterwards, since it was known that the farm would soon be vacant, a man came from East Morton to see it, and was brow-beaten by Burnell's son William. Not surprisingly the man declined the farm, but introduced another prospective tenant. In spite of their behaviour, and there being another tenant in the offing, Vavasour allowed William and Samuel Burnell to retain their father's farm when he retired. Three years later John Burnell's brother died, and as the diary sourly comments, "was buried with much pomp for a person of his condition" [27 March 1803]. When Burnell himself died, the Vavasours rode over to Bolton Abbey to be out of the way for the funeral. This incident confirms the opinion of the editor of *The Purefoy Letters* that county society ran on a very subtle system of checks and balances.²² The landowners, for all their power and influence, were obliged to observe the restraints and conventions of an accepted code of conduct, so that a reliable tenant farmer and his dependents were unlikely to be

²² *The Purefoy Letters*, 71.

dismissed out of personal prejudice or spite, although naturally there were some exceptions.

William Vavasour mixed daily with his tenants and knew them and their families intimately. He took a close interest in all they did and was quick to chastise them if he disapproved of their conduct. He was “astonished and grieved exceedingly” [25 March 1800] when Robert Wardle burned almost a third of the moor, and after Simpson had “contrived to set Askwith moor on fire and did a great deal of mischief, [he] called him to order very roughly for burning sods at the hazard of burning the whole moor” [4 July 1806]. He “had a few words of an unpleasant stamp” [24 March 1798] with John Skirrow who had cut all the tops from the thorn trees in the great pasture, and “scolded James Harrison for pulling down Crook’s wall” [9 June 1800]. Moss of Snowden received an order to quit his farm “in consequence of having misbehaved about the preservation of game at Dob Park, contrary to his engagement with me” [8 October 1804]. Vavasour was somewhat mollified when three months later he “walked to Dob Park and finding that my tenants had taken sufficient care to preserve me a few pheasants I gave them to drink two guineas” [7 February 1805]. The threat to Moss was an empty one made in anger; three years after this he was again receiving the salary for preserving wood and game in Dob Park, because William Illingworth was “always drunk in Otley” [5 November 1807].

Vavasour often found himself involved in the private lives, personal quarrels and even criminal activities of his tenants. One for whom he showed immense sympathy was William Simpson, of Scales Farm, Askwith, who first consulted him in 1800 “upon being accused of stealing a leg of mutton and being bound over to answer for it at Otley sessions” [10 January 1800]. On another occasion Simpson’s wife came to tell Vavasour that “in consequence of a complaint laid against him by his brother Thomas, that he shamefully neglected his mother and refused payment of the annuity left her by her late husband, and that the old woman was on the point of perishing from want, hunger and cold, and was moreover eat up with vermin – Mr. Fawkes J.P. had thought fit to order the old woman to Thomas Simpson’s house and William was to pay 5s. a week for her maintenance – without deigning to enquire into the truth of this complaint or the legality of his own order” [3 December 1807]. Vavasour took prompt action; he wrote to Mr. Fawkes about the case, “in a stile [*sic*] which little suited his pomposity” [4 December 1807], and then “went to meet our peremptory magistrate, and he was glad to overrule his order in toto, refund fines and allow the Simpsons to be put upon a proper and natural footing” [9 December 1807].

Shortly after this, Simpson ran into financial difficulties, and sent word to William Vavasour that his affairs were deranged and that he needed help. An investigation revealed that the man was deeply in debt, and would have to sell nearly all his possessions to meet the payments he owed. Vavasour wrote soothing letters to Simpson's creditors, asking them to "have a little mercy and patience" [April 1808] and succeeded in setting his affairs upon a sounder footing. He felt that the man deserved pity for "after having been a drudge for the best part of his life he must now start again as he first began. His late wife appears to have been the cause of those debts and to have been in the constant habit of wasting his substance – he has been careful and industrious" [12 April 1808]. Simpson continued on his farm for another seventeen years, but in 1825 Vavasour decided reluctantly that he could keep him no longer.

In the 1820s a series of bad harvests crippled many farmers and rents were poorly paid. One of the strengths of the English farming system lay in the willingness of the landlord to shield his tenants from the worst effects of changing economic conditions. Thomas Todd's rent was reduced by a third one year when he defaulted in his half-yearly payment, "for the produce of land sells extremely ill – he is very poor and a helpless thing, and his land bad and in bad order" [5 January 1815]. John Kirkby, one of the most reliable tenants, had "complained of the heavy rent of his farm, which could not stand it in these times especially" [October 1821 and May 1822] and his rent had twice been reduced accordingly. William Simpson was given an unprecedented extension of four months in which to pay his rent in 1825, but although he managed to find the money, he was obviously in desperate financial straits. Vavasour ordered steps to be taken to secure all the rent due from Simpson at the end of the year, the bailiff was called in, and Simpson's effects were sold. "I am grieved to do this", wrote Vavasour, who was deteriorating in health, "but the man's sad circumstances and situation render it necessary, and ultimately I believe it will be no injury at all to him. It is very distressing but what can I do? By his own improvidence he has brought it on himself. He is perfectly steeped in debt and why should I let others take all and me have nothing?" [23 November 1825].

William Vavasour was also called upon to settle differences between his tenants, as when Simpson and Hudson could not agree over the use of Scales Green, or Young and Holmes had a dispute over money. Joseph Ward came "to talk about his unhappy marriage and disposing of his farm property and family" [10 June 1825]. When they were in need he sent them what relief he could, as he did the day he learned

that John Todd and his family “were in extreme distress from poverty and a scarlet fever which had attacked nearly all of them” [1 May 1804]. He also tried, unsuccessfully, to meddle in the matrimonial affairs of William Burnell, when he heard that the latter intended to marry a widow from Leeds, “a very foolish business and a roguish one too, since he had engaged himself to Mrs. Skirrow” [10 December 1814]. Burnell promised Vavasour that he would wait a fortnight and consider the matter, but instead went off to Leeds the next day to be married. Calling on him and finding him gone, Vavasour “sent a thundering letter after him threatening to turn him off his farm”, and Burnell returned unmarried, only to be married in Leeds the following day “in spite of all I could say to the contrary or the promise he had made to me” [13 December 1814].

Vavasour was closely involved with his tenants in the affairs of the townships of Askwith and Weston, and was expected to take the lead in all their activities. He inquired as to the quantity of wheat grown in Askwith, and “went to Leeds and delivered to the Revd. Mr. Holmes²³ the number of acres in our Parish inclosed under the Act of 1779, and the quantity of wheat grown etc. etc.” [10 February 1801] so that the tithe valuation could be made, and subsequently called each year to pay the modus rent and tithe. On several occasions he rode to Knaresborough “about concerns of the township of Askwith” [18 July 1810], or “respecting some surcharges upon the property tax served on some of the inhabitants of Weston” [17 February 1813]. It was to Vavasour that Thomas Todd’s daughter came to complain that “she was of late so ill-treated by her sister and brother that she wishes to get a small allowance from the town and retire from her father’s home” [30 November 1820]. In any dispute with a neighbouring township, or if any question of litigation arose, he was inevitably concerned.

One problem confronting the two townships was the maintenance of their roads. The inhabitants were legally responsible, under their Surveyor, for keeping them in good repair, and naturally they tended to concentrate on those most useful to themselves, and neglect those further afield. A prolonged legal battle began in 1807, when William Thornton, the miller at Dob Park²⁴ indicted certain “pack and prime” roads in that area. When these had been repaired and certified he indicted them again as “carriage” roads, which necessitated a better surface and the removal of gates, and the township of Weston elected to contest the issue. Vavasour tried in vain to come to some agreement

²³ The absentee vicar.

²⁴ Dob Park lies partly in Weston parish and partly in Fewston. The mill was on the boundary.

with the miller, offering him a road to himself and his customers if he would make and repair it himself, in an effort to save the expense of litigation. The town's inhabitants invited a special jury to view the road, and the case was tried at York. The trial lasted from ten o'clock in the morning until nine at night, and "we succeeded, much to the disappointment and confusion of our perjured enemies, thus they expend for nothing a large sum of money and lose their road which several times over I offered them for nothing – perverse and mischievous villains! !!" [29 March 1810].

The miller and his associates, unabashed by their defeat, collected more money between them and appealed to the court of the King's Bench for a new trial. They tore down the new gate which had been hung across the road and pulled up the posts; Vavasour and his attorney were insulted as they rode over Dob Park bridge. Finally, however, the application for a new trial against the inhabitants of Weston was refused, and Vavasour hoped that "our litigations and disputes about roads may end for ever and that for the time to come we may study to benefit and accommodate each other rather than injure one another's property by lawsuits" [15 May 1810]. From then on the inhabitants of the (Knaresborough) Forest seem to have concentrated their attention on Dob Park bridge, throwing the battlements down in 1811 and in 1822 to allow the passage of carts. Responsibility for the repair of the bridge rested with the parish of Fewston.²⁵ When William Thornton died Vavasour sent a message that the funeral procession could "pass free through John Gill's farm to Weston" [January 1822] for the burial.

In the course of managing his estate, William Vavasour came into conflict with his neighbour, Sir Henry Ibbetson of Denton Park, who also owned property in Askwith. James Ibbetson of Leeds, a wealthy woollen merchant, had acquired Denton in the early eighteenth century, and there had been constant friction between the two families over the strict delineation of their respective boundaries, and their ambition to extend their estates. No doubt this was aggravated by the natural hostility of an old landed family towards an aggressively competitive newcomer with much greater reserves of capital. The Enclosure Award of 1780 ended the basic controversy by sharing the common land in Askwith between four local families, including these two, but William Vavasour strongly suspected Sir Henry of taking every opportunity to increase his holding by underhand means, "for such has always been the way of himself and his father before – it is a

²⁵ This had been decided in a court case of 1659, when the parishes of Fewston and Weston had been jointly indicted for the repair of Dob Park bridge.

family failing of the Ibbetsons – everyone for himself is their honest maxim” [25 November 1813].

The two men quarrelled over the use of the remaining slips of waste ground in Askwith, and Vavasour went regularly to see which trees had been marked by Ibbetson’s woodman, in case any of them belonged to him. There is reason to believe that when the small estate of Grassgarths in Weston and Askwith came on the market in 1811 Sir Henry offered to buy it for Vavasour in exchange for some land of his which approached the manor of Denton. Vavasour promptly bought the property himself – “I have by purchase settled that business” – and refused adamantly to consider parting with any of his land; “this is a matter which I must never agree to and my successors ought, I apprehend, steadily to adhere to the same determination” [11 April 1811].

Unfortunately the suspicion and controversy over land marred the initially good social relationship of the two men, and split their tenants in the township of Askwith into two opposing factions. In 1815 the two sides quarrelled over the poor rate assessment, each claiming that the other paid too little, so a new valuation had to be made, “an expensive and imprudent business” [2 May 1815], which Vavasour believed had been initiated and encouraged by Sir Henry. There was an unpleasant sequel to the affair: “a heifer belonging to John Holmes and a horse to William Thompson had been cut and maimed by some hard-hearted villain so that the former was dead of its wounds. John Holmes was particularly aimed at in the appeal of Thomas Young and others against the poor rates of the town” [19 November 1815].

The quarrel extended into the Agricultural Society, of which both men were members and sometime Presidents. At the show in 1814 “Sir Henry Ibbetson was very unmannerly. He would not speak to me or look the way I was – he had done the same at York the other day and therefore I did not think myself obliged to bow with submission to him” [7 April 1814]. For three years in the 1820s they were hardly on speaking terms. Sir Henry twice tried to make up the quarrel, but although Vavasour spoke of wanting peace, he could not forgive the baronet “for doing everything cruel and to disgrace an old neighbour, and after all, for nothing he can find worth a thought” [27 December 1822]. When Sir Henry called to lay a complaint under the Trespass Act against a tenant of his, Vavasour insisted upon having it in writing and upon oath before he would grant a warrant, and “his honour objected to it, began to kick and otherwise behave so contradictory and troublesome that I do hope never to see him again upon any of his errands of tyranny and persecution” [August 1823]. Sir Henry

retaliated by threatening the inhabitants of Weston with indictment for failing to keep the roads in repair. The quarrel was never resolved; the baronet died in London in 1825 and Vavasour's comment was that of the embittered, sick old man he had become: "Sir Henry Ibbetson buried at Denton – a vast number of folks in black on the Otley road, mourners or pretended mourners, I fancy" [18 June 1825].

Vavasour's opinions and attitudes

Weston church is adjacent to the Hall, and William Vavasour attended divine service there each Sunday unless it was too cold or wet. The living was extremely poor, being worth only £14 a year until an addition was made to it under the terms of Queen Anne's Bounty in 1808; consequently it was held in plurality by an absentee vicar and administered by a succession of curates. The vicar died in 1816, and Vavasour exercised his right of presentment for the first and only time. He turned down the application of the curate, Mr. Pickles, for the living, and offered it instead to John Carter, his late sister's husband, who then visited Weston twice a year to take a service and receive his tithes. His curate received a salary of £50 a year. Mr. Pickles's sermon on the Sunday following his refusal appeared to Vavasour "very strange and very pointed, and his private conversation with Mrs. Vavasour appeared to her equally strange" [30 June 1816], a reminder of the bad blood and jealousy which were bred by the glaring inequalities within the Church.

Vavasour apparently never doubted the basic truths of the Christian religion and, like many of his contemporaries, regarded the Church as a unifying influence and a bulwark against social disorder. He contributed time and money towards keeping the fabric of Weston church in good repair, as in 1821 when he personally painted the pulpit, reading desk and his own pew. Out of curiosity he stopped once in Leeds to go to a Methodist meeting, and on another occasion visited one in Lincolnshire, "where a common labourer delivered a discourse that would not have disgraced a dignitary of the Church." [4 June 1815]. He did not believe, however, that Methodism was fit for popular consumption, and was outraged that the churchwardens at Weston "had requested the curate to have afternoon service as near 2 o'clock as possible, as afterwards appeared for the impudent purpose of going to a ranters' meeting at Askwith" [29 June 1823]. His diary does not record the reply he gave to Harrison, the local preacher, who called in 1825 to ask him to sell the Society of Methodists part of Jo. Procter's garden to build a meeting place upon in Askwith. Village legend has it

that Harrison told Vavasour they would build it on the road if he refused, and that is precisely where the chapel remains to this day.

The experience which Vavasour had of the Church of England and particularly its clergy was not such as to breed confidence and respect. He visited Chester Cathedral and found it "a discredit to the place, and to those under whose care it is, being ruinous and filthy" [October 1813]. When he went to Lincoln he found "the gates locked and female centinels in attendance, desiring to let you in for a certain price. This is the house of God put upon a footing with a playhouse or an exhibition room" [17 June 1816]. On another occasion he attended a service at York Minster, which he found to consist of "much show and little devotion, with a learned but incomprehensible discourse upon the Trinity" [17 June 1821].

Too often the clergy whom he met socially were men for whom he could only feel contempt. Tom Wilson, who married the daughter of Sir John Eden – "a wonderful occurrence that a woman of her rank and fortune should so dispose of herself" [30 March 1813] – and came to live at Burley Hall, ran into debt and tried to borrow money from his friends on the basis of a hard-luck story which proved to be false. As a young man he earned Vavasour's displeasure for rummaging his hares and taking liberties with his servants, and his outrageous behaviour on a visit to London in 1811 aroused comment. Another parson, a Mr. Rye, dining at Weston Hall after a day's shooting "got so handsomely drunk that as we were putting him to bed he made his escape out of the door naked and we found him almost lifeless in a bed of nettles. The next morning, ashamed of his roll in the nettles, he slipped off before I was up" [4 July 1797]. On the rare occasions that he met a conscientious clergyman, Vavasour appreciated his ministry: "a Mr. Fox did duty extremely well both in reading prayers and an excellent sermon well delivered" [30 May 1824].

In some respects William Vavasour was an impatient and intolerant man and one who guarded his rights jealously, deeply resenting any action which could be regarded as a slight upon him. In this he was reflecting the prevailing tendency amongst the older landed families, who were struggling to maintain their position on a modest income against a background of rising living standards and heavy taxation. Any relaxation of the traditional pattern of social rights and duties assumed the nature of a threat to that position, and was anathema. Those gentlemen who did not adhere to his strict code of conduct he disliked intensely. One of these was Mr. Goold who "treated me with incivility in sending down a set of servants and rabble to net the river without giving me any notice – discharged them from trespassing on

my side which gave great offence – this liberty has been taken more than once before” [10 July 1812]. Mr. Christopher Driver from Guiseley was another who “intruded himself upon me with a whole troop of people as a coursing party, and they conducted themselves in as blackguard a manner as one might expect from such a set of fellows, and after their amusement they made my gamekeeper drunk, who in that state seemed no more inclined than themselves to observe decency of behaviour” [1 February 1812].

It was William Vavasour’s pride as a young man that caused the breakdown of his friendship with Walter Fawkes of Farnley Hall. Riding home from Leeds after depositing his half-yearly rents in the bank, he was “insulted by a waggoner riding upon his carriage” [11 June 1800], and the next day went to Farnley to lodge a complaint against the man before Mr. Fawkes, in that gentleman’s capacity as a magistrate. He was extremely angry to hear later that the case had been dismissed, as he presumed, through connivance, and he seems to have had his suspicions confirmed a day or two later by a conversation with Mr. Fawkes’s clerk. For the next sixteen years, until the breach was healed, Walter Fawkes is referred to by Vavasour only in the most derogatory and uncharitable terms, and every misfortune which befell the Farnley family was seen as “another proof that providence is determined that they should have their full share of sorrow and afflictions” [17 August 1816].

There were others to whom William Vavasour showed tremendous kindness and understanding. His father’s brother, Charles, lived in lodgings at Vavasour’s expense and regularly went to stay at Weston Hall. He was always treated courteously, if firmly, by his nephew, although his behaviour sometimes caused embarrassment, as when he was overtaken going to Otley fair “in improper company – I sent him back and thereby disappointed him” [8 August 1814]. Shortly after one visit Sarah informed her husband that Mr. Charles was under arrest at the suit of a firm of merchants for non-payment of debts. Vavasour thought he had been wrong in letting matters go so far without speaking, but “sent a letter of a saucy cast and the money due to Harrison’s” [8 November 1810] immediately. Mr. Ridsdale of Esholt, when gazetted as bankrupt, was visited and his family comforted. Vavasour also tried vainly to secure the reinstatement of Harry Candler, the son of an old acquaintance from Guiseley, to his position as an articled clerk, fearing that if the boy were discarded it would be “to his ruin for ever” [December 1810]. His fears proved justified, because many years later he heard that “Harry Candler had died in King’s Bench prison whence he had been committed on account of his profligacy and extravagance” [March 1825].

William Vavasour's attitude towards the "able-bodied" or "undeserving" poor was similar to that of the vast majority of his contemporaries, and showed a fear of what their poverty might incite them to do, and an almost total lack of ability to comprehend their circumstances. On a journey through the West Country he found the road "so swarming with trampers and companies of ill-looking vagrants" that he believed "it must sometimes be a dangerous country to pass over" [June 1816]. Of the two such people whom he records as calling at Weston Hall, one was "a woman [who] fell into a feigned fit at our gate, and tricked us out of more money and victuals than she deserved" [3 April 1804], and the other was "a singular character of distress [who] came to us in the midst of the snow and wind – if real he was a pitiable object" [4 January 1809]. Vavasour's opinion of Mr. Stone, a gentleman whom he knew only slightly, indicates that a genuinely compassionate approach to the problem of poverty was so rare that anyone who exercised one was regarded as an eccentric: "Mr. Stone, who spent extraordinary sums in indiscriminately administering to the wants of the poor, shot himself at the White Horse, Otley, without any known cause for such a hasty deed, but this act as well as his general carriage in life seem to bespeak lunacy" [9 February 1812].

Where politics were concerned, Vavasour insisted that he was no party man, or, at least, that was the reason he gave for his refusal to sign a political declaration which Sir Henry Ibbetson presented to him in 1819, denouncing those who had called upon the High Sheriff to summon a county meeting in order to sound out public opinion on the conduct of the Manchester magistrates in the recent disturbances.²⁶ One suspects that his personal antipathy to Sir Henry influenced his decision, however, and that in general his sympathies lay with the Tories, in spite of his apparent dissatisfaction with Mr. Pitt's premiership in 1801. Pitt's return to office in 1804 provoked no adverse comment, whereas Mr. Fox's friends, who were introduced into the administration on the death of Pitt in 1806, were described as "a crew . . . of republicans and unprincipled fellows" [20 October 1806]. Vavasour certainly had no patience with the radical reformers whose meeting he attended in Otley; they were, in his opinion, "a set of men who under a pretence that it is necessary to reform abuses in Parliament etc. wish perhaps to create a general confusion, revolution, anarchy, and all sorts of disorder and confusion throughout the kingdom" [12 November 1819].

In the Parliamentary elections of 1806 and 1807, Vavasour

²⁶ The Peterloo massacre.

supported the Tory candidate, the Hon. W. H. Lascelles of Harewood, who wrote to him begging for his interest towards re-election as Member for Yorkshire. Lascelles withdrew in 1806, but not before Vavasour had drawn a comparison between his method of canvassing and that of his opponents, a "concourse of sychophants and parasites upon electioneering concerns", who had "pumped and wheedled" him, to his great annoyance, in Otley [31 October 1806]. The election of 1807 was a three-cornered contest between Lascelles, William Wilberforce and Lord Milton, a young man of twenty. There was tremendous excitement in the county as first Milton and then Wilberforce demanded a poll when the initial show of hands seemed to favour Lascelles. The election terminated in favour of Wilberforce and Milton, having led, as Vavasour predicted, to prodigious expense. Milton and Lascelles are reputed to have spent £200,000 between them on campaign expenses. Vavasour's disappointment expressed itself in a bitter denunciation of the "rabble of designing fellows and blackguards" who had "thrown out the most useful member which the commercial part of the county had ever had business with, to make room for a child" [6 June 1807]; on reflection he regretted his hasty words, and crossed them out.

William Vavasour took a close interest in current affairs, sharing a copy of the *Star* newspaper with Mr. Wilson of the Manor House, Otley. His diaries trace the progress of England's involvement in the wars against France and her satellites through to Napoleon's final surrender to Captain Maitland of the *Bellerophon*, and reflect the anxiety felt, particularly at the beginning of the century, at their economic consequences. The entry for 1 January 1801 is sombre: "this country enters upon the 19th century under circumstances of great calamity. From two scanty harvests in succession corn, and indeed every article of life, is at so advanced a price that the poor man's labour will scarcely procure him a sufficiency much less support a family – from eight years of expensive war with the French republic the trade of Leeds and many other large towns is at so low an ebb that thousands of families who formerly lived in plenty are now out of employ and would perhaps starve if not prevented by the charity and benevolence of the more opulent. We are grievously loaded with taxes and may expect heavier, for all advances towards peace have failed, and we are now in danger of having another powerful enemy in Russia . . .".

Between 1794 and 1804 the constant fear of invasion led to the formation of voluntary corps in every county, and the enrolment of 492,165 men. The officers were gentlemen of position, influence and fortune who made considerable sacrifices of time, effort and money in

the interests of what they conceived to be their patriotic duty. Vavasour held the rank of company Lieutenant in the Knaresborough Volunteers until 1797, and the following year accepted an invitation to command an Otley Armed Association, under a Parliamentary Statute designed to mobilise the voluntary services of the king's loyal subjects to the defence of the kingdom. In this way men between the ages of fifteen and sixty, who were neither infirm nor incapable of active service, aliens or Quakers, were to be armed and trained as an emergency corps for local duties in the event of an invasion. Vavasour's description of the "awkward" Burley recruits and William Shaw's appearance on parade "with a long mop stick in his hand which he thought might do as a substitute for a firelock" [23 May 1798] puts one in mind of Thomas Hardy's portrayal of the recruits in *The Trumpet Major*. The Association soon numbered about ninety rank and file, who were eventually armed with musquets of Prussian make from the Tower, and held regular Field Days for training and exercise.

At the end of 1798 Vavasour resigned his majority in the Association and accepted a commission in the 4th Battalion of the Lancashire Militia which was stationed at North Shields, but the many unpleasant experiences incidental to army life, added to the unlikelihood of actually defending north-eastern England from a French invasion, made him decide to take advantage of the government's offer of six month's pay to officers leaving the militia when the force was reduced at the end of 1799. He returned to Weston in time to receive his Christmas rents.

In 1796 William Vavasour was nominated a Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and on his return from military service he took up the office of a magistrate for the liberty of Cawood, Weston and Otley; in 1808 he was included in the Commission of the Peace for the West Riding, and assumed these wider duties in 1812. The work of a magistrate was very demanding in terms of time and money, and Vavasour carried it out conscientiously. He met his fellow justices regularly in Otley to settle current business and prepare for the Quarter Sessions, and also exercised a certain amount of judicial and administrative authority in his own home. He travelled to Doncaster, Pontefract, Wetherby, Skipton and Bradford sessions, taking an active part in the general administrative procedure of the West Riding.

His opinion of the other magistrates was not high; he speaks with disapproval of Clifton on the bench "in a sad and disgusting state of intoxication" [21 May 1813], and of Mr. Wilson's absence from the Quarter Sessions due to "obstinacy and want of accommodation for

the public" [19 October 1814]. He believed them to be "active or remiss according to the persons concerned rather than the facts laid before them" [7 August 1807], and ironically this shrewd assessment of others is equally applicable to his own attitude. He declined attending the Brewster sessions when an application for the renewal of an ale-licence was being discussed, "not wishing to give offence to either party" [8 September 1810]. Another licence was refused "partly owing to the man's incivility to me" [8 September 1812], and only one on the grounds that "the Carpenter's Arms was a house of constant irregularity and much disorder" [8 September 1814]. Vavasour visited the cotton mills in Otley, Burley and Blubberhouses under the terms of the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act of 1802, and interpreted the law very much in favour of the employers, with scant regard for the rights of the apprentices. Whilst there is no evidence that he or his fellow magistrates meted out excessive penalties under the Game Laws, harsh sentences were imposed for any kind of thieving,²⁷ and vagrancy in particular was severely treated. That which can be gleaned from the diaries of his work as a magistrate reveals him to be, in Trevelyan's words, "too rich to be corrupt or mean, proud to do hard public work for no pay . . . but often ignorant and prejudiced without meaning to be unjust, and far too often a law unto himself".²⁸

William Vavasour ended his diary in December 1827, a sick and desperately unhappy man. His wife inherited her father's fortune in 1814, much to the chagrin of her elder sister, who with her husband first disputed the will and then tried to gain an ascendancy over Sarah at William's expense. Vavasour's reaction was predictably aggressive and hostile, which had the effect of alienating his wife still further. There were no children, and by 1817 their relationship had so far deteriorated that Sarah left Weston and travelled abroad. In his loneliness and despair Vavasour leased a small house in Doncaster and talked of leaving Weston altogether. He developed what might now be described as a persecution complex, believing that none of his relations cared about him but were plotting against him; he sent a written advertisement to a distant relative saying that his "estate would be sold and the price the most ordinary attention from any relation, but if none offer themselves as purchasers . . . it would be disposed of to the younger son of some neighbours who have been particularly kind to me since September, 1817" [January 1819].

²⁷ Henry Lamb, a manservant, was sentenced to seven years' transportation in July 1816 for stealing a watch.

²⁸ G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History* (second ed., 1946), 353.

Sarah was summoned back to England at this juncture by her nephew, William Carter, to whom William Vavasour had also written in this vein, and an apparent reconciliation was effected. For the next few years she spent most of her time in Doncaster, and the couple visited each other at intervals; the strain was telling on Vavasour's health, and his handwriting was becoming less legible. In July 1826 he had a slight stroke which almost deprived him of speech, and at Christmas, for the first time in his life, he was obliged to have help to receive his rents. His friends and neighbours, Clifton, Wilson, Fawkes and Ibbetson were all dead; he noted that several old men in the parish had died recently, and spoke of himself as "fast approaching my latter end" [August 1825] although he was not yet sixty. The last entry in his diary, six years before his death in 1833, is poignant: "from ill usage my health is ruined and I am so paralysed, which I attribute to Mrs. Vavasour and her treacherous relations, that I am fit for nothing, therefore I conclude my journal hoping that providence under the Almighty may yet befriend me which none of that family will do. Upon the contrary rob me whenever they can and to the utmost" [31 December 1827].

THE DEWSBURY RIOTS AND THE REVD. BENJAMIN INGHAM

by
Mrs. BEATRICE SCOTT

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY there were a number of serious riots occasioned by rises in the price of flour. Bread riots were quite common if the price of flour rose sharply. In 1766 there were riots in Abingdon and Birmingham caused by the high price of flour. The rioters took the flour from the millers and sold it in the market place for what they considered a reasonable price. This was not an uncommon occurrence when the people thought the middle man was overcharging.

After the wet summer of 1739 the price of flour rose steeply which was the cause of quite serious riots at Dewsbury. There was an account of these riots in the *Weekly Miscellany*:¹

Country News

Wakefield April 30th. Last Saturday some of the inhabitants of Dewsbury, Batley, and Earls Heaton and other adjacent villages, assembled in a riotous and tumultuous manner; with a pretence to prevent the Badgers² from making wheatmeal or flower, to send into other counties, alledging that such practice would cause a scarcity in Yorkshire, and much advance the price of corn; the number assembled on that day was supposed to be 4 or 500; they went to Dewsbury Mill, and on their way met with John Wilson's cart, supposed to be loaded with flower, but having some advice of the design, had fill'd his sacks with bran duff etc. The mob finding themselves deceived, went to the mill, broke in pieces the Boulting Mill, and took away wheatmeal they found there.

On Sunday 27th, the rioters assembled again in like manner, broke a Boulting Mill at another place in Dewsbury Parish: Sir Samuel Armitage Bart, the High Sheriff, and Sir John Kaye, Bart, hearing this, with their servants went to meet them, in order to prevail with them to disperse; upon which the High Sheriff read the proclamation, but to no purpose, for the rioters threw stones and other things at them, and refusing to disperse, advanced to another mill at Thornhill Parish, where they took and carried away all meal and corn they found, pull'd part of the mill down, and carried away the poor mill man's provisions, as beef, bacon etc. Sir John and the

¹ The *Weekly Miscellany* was a Church of England newspaper, published in London and edited by the Revd. Richard Hooker. This extract is dated 8 May 1740.

² A "Badger" was a travelling salesman.

High Sheriff desired that some of them would come to his house at Grange on the day following, where he would call the neighbouring Justices together to hear their complaints, and redress their grievances, if any: accordingly some of the neighbouring Justices came there. The mob, supposed to be about 1,000, likewise came, by beat of drum, and colours carried before them, in defiance of authority; but the gentlemen were not able to prevail upon them to return to their homes, by any means they could use; therefore the rioters with Huzza's crying, they neither cared for the High Sheriff, nor the Justices of the Peace; left Sir John Kaye's house, and went to Bretton Mill, from thence to Woolly Mill, from thence to New Miller's Dam Mill, where they broke all the Boulting Mills they met with, and carried away all the corn and meal they found: as they went along their number increased, and many disorders were committed. The same day the rioters went to Criggleston in Sandal Parish, where they broke into a barn of Joseph Pollard, and took away and carried from thence a great quantity of flower; Pollard having some firearms, shot at some of them, took some prisoners, which prisoners he carried to Wakefield on Tuesday the 29th, when Mr Nevile and Mr Zouch were met at Capt. Burton's, to consult what course to take, in order to quash this uproar, in the meantime a great number of these rioters, by beat of drum, advanced upon Wakefield Streets about two o'clock, boldly saying, they were come to release those prisoners, and they would pull down Pollard's house, hang him up and skin him like a cat; but Captain Burton, of Wakefield, boldly advanced to the head of these rioters, knocked down 3 or 4 of them with his stick, seized and took 6 or 7 of them prisoners, and in person went before those prisoners to the House of Correction, where they now lye; the persons charged refusing to go for fear of the mob. The same day a detachment of soldiers being sent from York, came to Wakefield; since which they have been tolerably quiet; but we hear there are still great murmurings among the common people.

Those rioters who had been arrested were tried at York on 22 July.³ Of these four were sentenced to death. Two men and two women were sentenced to transportation for fourteen years, thirteen men to transportation for seven years, and two men were sentenced to be burnt in the hand. Twelve men and one woman were acquitted, and five men acquitted for "want of prosecution". Two men were fined six shillings and eight pence and sentenced to gaol for one year and two others who were found guilty of riot at Criggleston also received a similar sentence. An unexpected consequence of these riots was that the Revd. Benjamin Ingham was accused of being their instigator.

Benjamin Ingham was born in Ossett in 1712, the son of William Ingham, a prosperous farmer and hatter. As a boy Benjamin showed signs of being extremely devout and was obviously destined for the

³ *York Courant*, July 1740.

Church. Educated at Batley Grammar School he became a usher there at the age of sixteen, going up to The Queen's College, Oxford, in 1730. At Oxford at this time there was a group of religious "Enthusiasts" nicknamed "Sacramentarians", "The Holy Club" or "Methodists", probably started by Charles Wesley and William Morgan. John Wesley became their leader; he was then a Fellow of Lincoln College.

Benjamin Ingham joined these "Methodists" in 1732. Because of ill health he returned home in the autumn of 1734. He founded a religious society in Ossett and also taught forty poor children to read. This was the beginning of the Charity School which he founded at Ossett. After his return to Oxford he was ordained in June 1735 and appointed reader at St. Sepulchre's in the City of London. Rather reluctantly Ingham acceded to John Wesley's request to accompany him and his brother Charles and two others as missionaries to the newly-founded colony of Georgia. After his return to Ossett in 1737 he had a great success as a preacher, being invited by numerous clergy to preach in their churches, but this popularity did not last long, either because the clergy did not like his "Enthusiasm", or because the "Methodists" were becoming unpopular; they no longer offered him their pulpits. Undeterred, Ingham went about preaching and founding societies. As he wrote to James Hutton,⁴ they were "suffering much persecution".

In the *Weekly Miscellany* of 8 June 1740 the following letter was printed, with the introductory sentence provided by the editor.

As the Methodists still continue their meetings both in London and other parts of the Kingdom, the following passage may be of good use in order to apprise well meaning people of the real intentions of these Enthusiasts and to show the reason why the Dissenters have favoured them.

Mr. Hooker.

You have, no doubt on't seen account in the Public Prints of the Riot we had in this County, It took rise at Dewsbury where Mr. Ingham has propagated Methodism. Some will have him to be the author of this insurrection, by preaching up, as he certainly did, a Community of Goods, as

⁴ James Hutton was the son of the Revd. John Hutton, a non-juror, and his wife Elizabeth Ayscough, a cousin of Isaac Newton. James Hutton was educated at Westminster School and bound apprentice to William Innys, a bookseller of St. Pauls; had his apprenticeship been completed he would have accompanied the Wesleys, Ingham and Delamotte to Georgia. He opened a bookshop of his own, "The Bible and the Sun", in Little Wild Street. He married a Swiss Moravian and played a great part in establishing the Moravian Church in England.

was practised by the Primitive Christians. How much he may have contributed towards raising the mob, I will not pretend to say, but what I am going to tell you of this Clergyman is matter of fact. I can prove it, and you may make what use of it you think proper. A gentleman of Leeds, who was one of Mr. Ingham's followers, asked him, what difference there was between the Church of England and his way of worship? To which Mr. Ingham replied "The Church of England is the Scarlet whore, prophesied of in the Revelations; and there will be no true Christianity as long as that Church subsists.

Your humble Servant
Yorkshire.

Ingham, who was staying in London in June 1740, replied to the accusations at some length:

Saturday June 21st 1740.

Mr. Hooker.

In your paper of June 8th you inserted a letter from "Yorkshire" concerning me. Had I followed my own inclinations I should have taken no more notice of this, than of another falsity that was printed some time ago in the news, that the woollen manufacturing in Yorkshire was likely to be ruined, implying by me; and of many more spread up and down by common report, which often contradict one another. But the advice of friends has prevailed with me to write this, in answer to what the author of that letter charges me with. The author of that letter charges me with two things directly and another indirectly – As to the riot that was lately in Yorkshire he does not say directly that I was the cause of it, but he insinuates something like it, as being a consequence of my doctrine When the riot happened I was absent from Dewsbury parish at the time and for several days after. I neither knew nor heard anything of it, till it was over. As soon as I heard of it, I spoke against it as a very wicked thing and of dangerous consequence. I inquired particularly whether any persons that frequented the Society were in it. I heard of three. But one of them had been turned out some weeks before for misbehaviour; the other two I ordered to be turned out directly and publicly disowned; tho' I believe that they as many more were drawn to run among the rabble through weakness and curiosity. The gentleman says some will have me be the author of this insurrection. *Its true, they say so.* And indeed everything that comes amiss is laid at my charge. *They said* I was the occasion of the wet season last summer, of the long frost in winter, of the present war; and if it blows a storm some or other say I am the cause of it. But this is the talk of the vulgar; men of sense know better. Does not everyone know *they say* a common report is generally false – But further to the second charge supposing I had preached up a community of goods, as this gentleman positively asserts (which I never did) would it thence follow that people have a liberty to plunder, that they may take away their neighbours goods by force? If the one were the necessary consequence of the other then the apostles and first Christians were much to blame in what they did – If all were Christians it would not be necessary to

have a community of goods. None were obliged to be in it in the apostles days, they enter'd into it willingly. But in the present state of things it would be both absurd and impracticable to attempt such a thing. I once preached a charity sermon at Leeds – I only exhorted my hearers to imitate the Primitive Christians and to contribute generously to the wants of their poor brethren according to their ability – for I neither *did* not *do* preach up a community of goods.

Ingham then goes on to refute the other accusation that he called the Church of England the “scarlet whore”. The editor adds a note of his own to this letter in which he says “But what I insist upon is this – that his *public conduct* [Ingham's] is insincere and dishonest”.

When Ingham returned to Ossett in July more trouble awaited him in the form of a vicious attack in a pamphlet by the Revd. Thomas Bowman, vicar of Dewsbury. Thomas Bowman himself was in trouble in 1731. On 5 June of that year he preached the Visitation Sermon at Wakefield, in which he told an astonished and indignant congregation of clergy that he did not think it necessary to have episcopal ordination. His living at Dewsbury was sequestered (he was in any event a pluralist, also being vicar of Aldborough, near Boroughbridge, and chaplain to Charles Hope, first Earl of Hopetoun). The loss of his living caused him some distress, and he wrote to the Archbishop of York (at Downing Street, London) asking if he would issue a certificate stating that Alborough was only twenty-four miles from Dewsbury.⁵ The Archbishop employed the masterly strategy of silence. In 1736, after four letters had been ignored, Bowman wrote an apology and recanted, promising to employ a near relation, Mr. Hoggett (who was curate to Mr. Clarkson at Silkstone), to take Sunday duty for £30 per annum, and to be in charge of the school for another £25.

Like the unjust steward in the parable, Bowman could not resist attacking Ingham after the Dewsbury Riots, in a pamphlet.⁶ No doubt he was assisted in this by the curate, Ingham's old enemy, John Godley.⁷ The pamphlet was entitled “The Imposture of Methodism

⁵ Letters to the Archbishop of York [Lancelot Blackburn], Borthwick Institute, Bp. C & P 111/8.

⁶ A copy of this is in the Library of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

⁷ Between 1716 and 1753 the Revd. John Godley was curate of Ossett, a chapelry in the parish of Dewsbury. In 1737 Ingham wrote to Charles Wesley “I have just now been talking to Mr. Godley, curate of Ossett. (You know, I believe that he is mis-named.) I was all of a tremble when I talked to him and for a good while after. He took my reproof very uneasily. But however he trembled as well as me. I have lent him ‘The Country Parson’ to read.” This book, *The Country Parson's Advice to his Parishioners*, published in 1680, had a great influence on the “Methodist” undergraduates at Oxford, especially on Ingham who ordered numerous copies from his bookseller, James Hutton.

displayed, in a letter to the Inhabitants of the Parish of Dewsbury – Occasioned by the rise of a certain modern sect of Enthusiasts (among them) called *Methodists*”.

Extracts from the text showing Bowman’s case against the “Methodists” and Ingham are given below:—

I have been so often informed from persons of undoubted credit and reputation of the impious spirit of enthusiasm and superstition which has of late crept in among you, which sadly threatens a total ruin and destruction of all religion and virtue. I have been myself in some measure our eye witness of this monstrous madness and religious frenzy, which like a rapid torrent bears down everything beautiful and uniform before it, and instead of that order and decency of worship which scripture requires of Christians introduces nothing but a confused and ridiculous medly of nonsense and inconsistency.

. . . the contagion at present is pretty much confined to the dregs and refuse of the people, the weak, the unsteady mob, always fond of innovation; . . . there may be more danger than is generally apprehended. Religious madness is by far the most furious of all frenzy . . . whilst true piety, like a genial morning sunshine diffuses a gentle warmth and pleasure, and makes everything gay and cheerful around it

What I have to do on the present occasion, will be to make it appear that the particular, distinguishing doctrines and principles so industriously propagated under the name of Methodism, amongst you, are false and absurd and consequently that the preachers of such doctrine and principles are not ministers of the gospel of Christ but false teachers and imposters

I doubt not that the Methodists will tell you, it was never the design of their ministers either to separate or cause others to separate from the established church

That all clergymen of reputation in your neighbourhood have actually refused them the use of their pulpits, I both believe, and am glad of it . . . this was not done till by their extravagant flights and buffooneries they had made the church more like a bear garden; than the house of God; and the rostrum nothing else but the trumpet of sedition, and blasphemy and everything destructive to religion and good manners. Besides I know no law either of God or man that obliges any incumbent whatsoever to leave his pulpit open to any saucy intruder, or to let it out as a stage for Mountebanks or Jack-puddings, to play their tricks upon and from thence to propagate their impostures and delusions

A third mark of imposture propagated by these mad devotionalists is their teaching, *that it is lawful and expedient for mere laymen, for women, and the meanest and most ignorant mechanics, to minister in the church of Christ.*

That it is not only lawful for, but the duty of all Christians to endeavour to instruct one another in the ways of religion and virtue But that

mere laymen and women, tho' of the greatest and most distinguished abilities, much less the most ignorant and illiterate persons should take upon themselves the preaching and expounding the word of God.

Another doctrine which carries along with it a most conspicuous and flagrant mark of imposture is, that in order to be true Christians we are *absolutely* to abandon and renounce all wordly goods and *possessions whatsoever; to have all things in common* amongst one another; and *intirely* to neglect everything in this life, but prayer and *meditation*; to be *always* on our knees at our *devotions*.

What mischief this doctrine (chiefly calculated to amuse and captivate the lazy and indolent) has of late introduced among you. It is to me a most shocking and amazing sight to behold the numbers of familie^s from moderate and easy circumstances reduced to beggary and ruin and starving in every shape of misery and wretchedness from this ridiculous extravagancy of devotion

That there are some individuals of the clergy who are a discredit and scandal to their professions I am not so sanguine as to deny. . . . but this I may safely affirm that there is not in all Christendom a body of men, where virtue and piety, sound learning, and every grace and ornament of their profession are more eminently conspicuous than among the established clergy of this nation.

I have before me a letter of Mr. Ingham's⁸ – To prove he was not directly the cause of the riots at Dewsbury, he says he was absent from Dewsbury Parish But I know that he was within four miles all the time and had constant communication with several of the inhabitants by means of his nocturnal assemblies. He had rashly given out some time before the riot, that in a few hours warning he could have ten thousand men ready upon any emergency. In a day or two after he retired to a friend's house as if to avoid suspicion. This conduct of his was at that time so much taken notice of and suspected that the magistrates were almost determined to apprehend him as a disturber and incendiary, and I believe were only deterred from it, in consideration of what might happen from the fierceness and fury of his adherents.

But further Mr. Ingham positively denies that he has ever preached the community of goods and appeals to a charity sermon in Leeds for his vindication But he has often asserted things contrary to the truth, therefore he must not affect his bare word should obtain any credit in this case. I know that he has endeavoured to persuade several of his followers to sell their estates and possessions as the first Christians did for the relief of their poor brethren Nor am I surprised when he asks "supposing I had preached of a community of goods would it therefore follow, that people have a liberty to plunder, that they may take their neighbour's goods by force". I must own my reason tells me that if everything ought to be in common, there can be no such thing as private property, and consequently

⁸ Ingham's letter to *Weekly Miscellany*, 21 June 1740.

every man has an absolute right to what he wants wheresoever he finds it. . . . He says again "I go to church constantly and receive the sacrament". I shall not pretend to contradict the fact. It will indeed from thence follow that insincerity and hypocrisy are his complexioned vices; but not that he can be a member of that Church to whose authority he refuses to submit and whose ordinances he openly violates and defies.

Conclusion

I have now finished what I proposed in this undertaking; which was to lay before you the true nature of that new fangled religion, which under the name of Methodism is of late so industriously propagated among you, and the particular vices and principles and practices of its respective ministers; in order that being convinced of the folly, imposture and evil tendency of this extraordinary way of worship you may stand firm and unshaken against the wiles and stratagems of these subtle deceivers of mankind.

There seems to be no evidence at all that Ingham in any way was behind the Dewsbury Riots, the cause of which seems to have been quite simply a fear of a shortage of flour and rising prices. But the accusation against him does illustrate the quite astonishing animosity which the early "Oxford Methodists" aroused among many members of the Church. On the whole the eighteenth-century Anglican Church was a tolerant church. It was exhausted by the strife and disputes of the seventeenth century and perhaps for this reason feared that this small band of "Enthusiasts" would stir up strife and dissension again. To be fair to the Church it probably was not so lax as its "Methodist" detractors tried to make out in self justification, though there were many examples of non-residence and pluralism. This group of Oxford graduates, earnest and serious, and willing to work themselves inordinately hard, probably appeared self-righteous in their extreme puritanism and must have been extremely irritating to their more easy going contemporaries. In the *York Courant* of 10 May 1740 there is the following paragraph:

On Saturday Mr. Whitfield attended by several of the genteelest of his followers went on board a ship lying near Rotherhithe, to take a view of her accommodations and agree on terms with the Captain for his voyage to Georgia for which colony in company with some others lately gone Methodically mad, he designs shortly to embark.

It was one thing to accuse someone of being "Methodically mad" but surely quite another to accuse a man of causing serious riots without any real evidence.

However, these attacks on Ingham appear to have been a help to his work rather than a hindrance. His future wife, Lady Margaret Hast-

ings, wrote to the Countess of Huntingdon in 1739: "He has one mark of being a true disciple, persecution is the sure lot the Scripture tells us of all those that are so . . .'. In spite of being shunned by the majority of the clergy, Ingham's work of founding societies prospered. In 1742 he handed over forty-three societies to the pastoral care of the Moravian Brethren. With the help of his wife he bought the Falneck estate at Pudsey for a Moravian settlement, which adopted the name "Falneck". After 1753 he worked chiefly on the Yorkshire, Lancashire and Westmorland borders, with his own helpers, founding societies and building chapels which were later known as "Inghamite".

OBITUARY

FRANK BECKWITH

1904-1977

Frank Beckwith was a member of the Thoresby Society's Council from 1940 to 1959, and Honorary Editor from 1945 to 1955 (for the first year jointly with W. B. Crump); and the Society is deeply indebted to his work as author, editor, and lecturer.

He was born in Leeds, and passed all his life there. At the Central High School (now City of Leeds School) he acquired a sound basis of humanistic scholarship and a lasting fondness for Chaucer; and he remained grateful for the help of the headmaster, Walter Parsons.

In 1921 he became a student assistant in the University Library at Leeds and while working there graduated B.A. in 1928 and M.A. (with distinction) in 1936; in 1969 the University made him an honorary M.Litt.

He remained in the University Library until 1937, becoming a senior assistant and then an assistant librarian. He was involved in many aspects of the Library's work, and was largely responsible for ensuring the orderly transfer of its collections to the new Brotherton building in 1936. But he worked chiefly at cataloguing and classification, of which he was in charge for his last six years. He was particularly concerned with the Library's collection of early translations from English into French (and with characteristic generosity also contributed to the index of such material in the French Department); this, supplemented by his study of manuscript material in the British Museum, provided the starting point for his contribution to *The Library* and for his M.A. thesis. It was characteristic of his thoroughness that when the Library's collection of Icelandic materials was to be catalogued, he added Icelandic to his linguistic attainments. All this work was informed by wide culture, deep and exact scholarship, and mastery of library and bibliographical techniques.

From 1937 until his retirement in 1969 he was Librarian of the Leeds Library, founded in 1768 and now the oldest proprietary library in the country. This was a post which made fewer demands, but offered new opportunities, which he was quick to grasp. He soon acquired an intimate knowledge of its very rich collections, which he placed at the service not only of its members (who felt they owed him

an incalculable debt), but also, with the generosity which was one of his most notable characteristics, of many outside enquirers – humble seekers for some bit of information, thesis writers from the University, and distinguished scholars from this country and overseas.

From its foundation in 1943 he was active in the Association of Yorkshire Bookmen, giving the first of the lectures it arranged, editing its *Broadsheet*, and becoming president of its Leeds branch.

His loyalties to his town, his church, his university, and his library all called out an intellectual response. How fruitfully he developed it is amply shown in the list of writings that follows. Even when they deal briefly with some familiar topic, they usually bring some new fact or interpretation. Almost all of them show not only the pertinacity of his search for truth and his exactitude in dealing with evidence, but also his power of presenting his results and interpreting them in the light of wide scholarship and culture.

Geoffrey Woledge

ANNOTATED LIST OF THE WRITINGS OF FRANK BECKWITH

Compiled by Geoffrey Woledge

As well as publications, this list includes a selection of unpublished writings in the Leeds University Library and the Leeds Library. Most of these are the result of very solid research, and many of them, though they have not received the author's final touches, are digested and written up in continuous form. It omits many short book reviews, though few of these are without significant touches of insight or information.

In each section the items are arranged in approximate chronological order of subject.

Abbreviations

<i>B.Q.</i>	<i>Baptist Quarterly</i>
<i>L.L.</i>	Location: Leeds Library
<i>L.U.L.</i>	Location: Leeds University Library
<i>P.Th.S.</i>	<i>Publications of the Thoresby Society</i>
<i>U.L.R.</i>	<i>University of Leeds Review</i>

SECULAR LOCAL HISTORY

Bases of Yorkshire bibliography. [Typescript, 1947.] (L.U.L.)

An introductory essay, followed by lists of bibliographies, etc., covering Yorkshire as a whole, some in apparently final form, others in rough draft.

Association of Yorkshire Bookmen: The bookmen's broad sheet [later broadsheet]. 1944-73.

F.B. contributed lists of new books of Yorkshire interest entitled, from 1952 to 1972, "Annual survey of Yorkshire books"; they are particularly useful for their coverage of the output of obscure publishers. He also contributed signed reviews, and probably some of the unsigned ones. From 1958 to 1972 he was Honorary Editor.

Yorkshire historical fiction: a reader's guide, pp. [vi], 50. Clapham: Dalesman, 1947.

Includes a perceptive introduction on the nature of the historical novel.

A guide to Leeds and a few excursions beyond, pp. 64. Leeds, Wigley: 1962.

[Meanwood, from the middle ages to the twentieth century. Typescript drafts and notes.] (L.U.L.)

"The architectural tradition [of Leeds and neighbourhood]", *The Architect and Building News*, 207, No. 22 (2 June 1955), 642-8.

Armley 1685-1770. [Envelope containing typescript article and copious transcripts from manuscript sources.] (L.L.)

Early travellers to Leeds. [Envelope containing typescript (of lecture?), notes and cuttings.] (L.L.)

[Enclosures, mostly West Riding. Envelope containing transcripts from contemporary newspapers.] (L.L.)

[Guiseley enclosure. Transcripts of act, award, accounts, etc.] (L.L.)

"A poem descriptive of the manners of the clothiers written about the year 1730". Edited with notes, *P.Th.S.*, XLI, Pt. 3 (*Miscellany* 12, Pt. 3) (1950), 275-82.

"'Pendavid Bitterzwegg': John Berkenhout", *P.Th.S.*, XLI, Pt. 3 (*Miscellany* 12, Pt. 3) (1950), 283-99.

"Introductory account of the '*Leeds Intelligencer*', 1754-1866", in *Extracts from the 'Leeds Intelligencer' and the 'Leeds Mercury', 1777-82*. [Ed. G. D. Lumb and J. B. Place], (*P.Th. S.*, XL, Pt. 3, 1955, i-lxi).

"*The Yorkshire Post*": *two centuries*. By Mildred A. Gibb, Frank Beckwith, and members of the editorial staff of the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, pp. xii, 112; plates. [Leeds]: Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Co., 1954.

Two [sic] Meanwood landmarks. [Typescript.] (L.U.L.)

On King Alfred's Castle, Revolution Well, and Oates's column.

[Life of Joseph Priestley. Numerous folders containing portions, perhaps the whole, of typescript text, with notes, correspondence, etc.] (L.U.L.)

Joseph Priestley in England and America, 1789-1802, being the Priestley-Wilkinson MSS, edited with an introduction and notes by Frank Beckwith and W. H. Chaloner.

Unpublished typescript in the possession of Professor W. H. Chaloner, Dept. of History, University of Manchester.

"Joseph Priestley and the Leeds tradition" ("Leeds university and the Yorkshire Tradition": III), *U.L.R.*, 2, No. 1 (1950), 20-9.

A brilliant and balanced account of Priestley's career, and speculations on his influence.

"A Priestley portrait", *B.Q.*, VII, No. 7 (1935), 325.

"Joseph Priestley, cartographer", *Notes and Queries*, CXCV (1950), 239.

Distinguishes several contemporaries of the same name.

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[Trade unionism and parliamentary reform in and about Leeds, c. 1816-31. Typed draft with additional notes. 1945 or later.] (L.U.L.)

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"Leeds and parliamentary reform, 1820-32". By A. S. Turberville, completed by F.B., *P.Th.S.*, XLI, Pt. 1 (*Miscellany* 12, Pt. 1) (1945), 1-88.

Owing to the death of A.S.T., the last quarter was written by F.B., partly on the basis of materials collected by A.S.T.

Thomas Taylor. *Regency architect, Leeds* (*P.Th.S. Monographs*, 1), pp. ix, 95[5]; 7 plates. 1949.

Letters of the Rev. Patrick Brontë to the "Leeds Intelligencer", *Brontë Society Transactions*, Pt. 70 of the Society's Publications; No. 5 of Vol. 13 (1960), 433-6.

A description with quotations.

"Robert Baker", *U.L.R.*, 7, No. 1 (1950), 39-49. Addendum, *ibid.*, No. 2 (1950), 260.

"The Headingley miser [Robert Arthington]", *U.L.R.*, 9, No. 2 (1964), 116-26.

"Fifty years ago: or, in the beginning," *The Gryphon*, N.S. XIV, No. 6 (May 1933), 247-9.

References to the development of the Yorkshire College site and buildings, 1879-84.

"Forty years on", *U.L.R.*, 8, No. 2 (1962), 110-22.

Reminiscences of C. M. Gillespie and other members of the Leeds Library connected with the University.

The Gryphon: the journal of the University of Leeds, N.S. XIII-XVI, 3rd Ser. I-VII, and further unnumbered issues. 1931-48.

This student periodical contained a section of news for the Old Students Association edited in this period by F.B. In the "Personalia", he often added his own comments (as, for instance, a gracefully appreciative obituary of Miss F. J. Passavant, the first librarian of the Yorkshire College and University, in Nov. 1944); he also contributed to other parts book reviews (often unsigned) and unsigned news items. In 1948 the

arrangement between the O.S.A. and *The Gryphon* was discontinued, but he continued to contribute personal news to the *University of Leeds Review* (see below). He thus carried out this pedestrian task (though not in a pedestrian way) for thirty-seven years.

“Personalialia” [including book reviews], *U.L.R.*, 1-11 (1948-68).

“William Bunting Crump (1868-1950)”, *The Naturalist* (1950), 68-9.
Includes *inter alia* an excellent account of W. B. C.’s many services to the Thoresby Society.

“Mr. Frank Beckwith looks back: L[eesds] C[entral] H[igh] S[chool] 1916-21”, *The Centralian* (July 1971), pp. 10-18.

PROPRIETARY LIBRARIES

“The beginnings of the Leeds Library”, *P.Th.S.*, XXXVII, Pt. 2 (Miscellany 11, Pt. 2) (1941), 146-65.

The Leeds Library, pp. 23 [Leeds, 1950].

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The Leeds Library, 1768-1968, pp. 120[6]; 5 plates. “Printed for private circulation”, 1968.

“The Leeds Library and Sir Walter Scott”, *U.L.R.*, 11, No. 2 (1968), 152-61.

“The eighteenth-century proprietary library in England”, *The Journal of Documentation*, III, No. 2 (Sept. 1947), 81-98.

“A brief summary of extended research . . . still being pursued by the author.” He did pursue it, but instead of publishing the results himself he communicated them to Professor P. Kaufman, who calls the above paper “a most concise authoritative account” and “an indispensable guide to any subsequent research”, and expresses his “deep appreciation for constant assistance over the years”, which included personally compiling many onerous statistics. (*The Community Library*, 1967).

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[Dissent in Leeds, 1554-1700. Mostly typed fair copy, but latter part partly drafts, partly notes. 1959 or later.] (L.U.L.)

[History of dissent. Box of transcripts, notes and correspondence.] (L.L.)

[The church in Leeds, mostly seventeenth-century. Drafts and notes.] (L.L.)

“The ‘old dissent’: presbyterians, independents, baptists”, Chapter 4 (pp. 75-94) in *A history of Christianity in Yorkshire*, ed. F. S. Popham. Religious Education Press, 1954.

“Dumb dogs and caterpillars”, *U.L.R.*, 10, No. 2 (1966), 132-42.

An appreciation of the literary style of puritans.

“‘The torments of Hell.’ S. Richardson, 1658”, *B.Q.*, VI, No. 7 (1933), 323-4.

Identifies the author of a work later published in French translation.

“A Yorkshire manuscript of 1687. William Mitchell’s ‘Difference betwixt Egypt and Canaan’ ”, *B.Q.*, VIII, No. 3 (1936), 167-73; No. 4 (1936), 217-22.

“John Moore and ‘The dying experience of Alice Rawson’, Heaton, 1697”, *B.Q.*, IX, No. 6 (1939), 372-8.

A note on Micaiah Towgood [1700-92]. [Typescript. 29 June 1939.] (L.U.L.)

[Religion in eighteenth-century Leeds. Drafts and notes.]

A lecture to the Thoresby Society, Nov. 1952. With it are substantial connected accounts in typescript of Roman Catholics, Quakers, Baptists, Congregationalists, the Church of England, and the “lunatic fringe”.

“James Foster, D.D. 1697-1753”, *B.Q.*, V, No. 7 (1931), 314-21.

A bibliographical study of his influence on the Continent.

“Baptists two hundred years ago: 1733-38”, *Baptist Times*, 11 June 1931, p. 417.

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“Thomas Langdon of Leeds”, *Baptist Times*, 15 Dec. 1932, p. 893.
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The attempt to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-90. Part 1. 1941. (L.U.L.)

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INDEX

(*The Hon. Editors acknowledge with thanks the help given by Miss D. M. Leak in the compilation of this Index*)

* Indicates more than one mention on the page cited

- Abingdon, 187
 Akers, Thomas, 81
 Aldborough (Yorks), 191
 Albutt, *Dr.* Clifford, 54
 Andover incident, 82
 Anglican Church, 194
 Anti-Corn Law campaign, 10*n.*
 Anti-Poor Law movement, 111
 Apothecaries, 83-4
 Armitage, *Sir* Samuel, 187-8
 Armstrong, *Miss*, 59
 Askwith, 159, 160, 168, 171, 174, 176, 177, 178*, 179-80; Grassgarths estate, 178; Scales Green, 175
 Association of Yorkshire Bookmen, 197
 Atkinson, Edward, 54; Emma (*née* Boyle), 19*n.*; Joseph, 19*n.*; William, 170
 Atkinson and Bolland, *solicitors*, 116, 127
 Ayscough, Elizabeth, *see* Hutton
- Babies Welcome Society, 60
 Bagshaw, *Sir* William, 169
 Baildon, 159
 Baily, *family*, 43; Mary Anne, 34, 54, 55*; Walter, 34, 48, 54*n.*
 Baines, Edward (*senior*), 9*n.*, 11, 85, 86; (*junior*), 48; *Mrs.* Edward (*junior*), 27, 30*n.*, 33*n.*
 Bakewell, *Miss*, 58
 Balmforth, Matthew, 113
 Banks, George, 115, 116, 119, 131
 Barbour, Samuel, 142
 Barran, *Mrs.*, 47
 Bath, 163, 167
 Batley, John, 17
 Batley, 187; Grammar School, 189
 Baulby, George, 117, 118, 120, 128
 Baynes, William, 10, 11*n.*
- Bean, J. W., 10
 Beckett, *Sir* John, 10, 11; William, 116
 Beckwith, Frank (obituary), 196-7; writings, 198-204
 Beecroft, *Mrs.* 30*n.*
 Bennett, Henry Grey, 7
 Benson, Robert, 75, 76
 Bentley, *families*, 21; Edward, 22
 Benyon, *Mr.*, *mill-owner*, 117, 124, 127
 Benyon, Benyon and Bage, 2
 Bickersteth, *Mrs.*, 30*n.*
 Birch, *Professor* A. De Burgh, 56, 58
 Birchall, *Mrs.*, 33, 54
 Birmingham, 187; organ recitals in, 139
 Bischoff, George, 116
Black Dwarf (Wooler), 2
 Blackburn, Lancelot, *Archbishop of York*, 191
 Blake, Barnett, 27, 28
 Blakelock, Ralph, 115, 120, 123
 Blanchard, Carrick, 113
 Bland, *families*, 21
 Blaug, Mark, 94
 Blockley, William, 113
 Blubberhouses, 185
 Boddy, John, 113
 Bodington, *Sir* Nathan, 47
 Bolton, 142*n.*
 Bonser, Kenneth John (obituary), 72-4
 Botterill, John, *alderman*, 149-50
 Bower, Joshua, 10
 Bowling, Martin, 171; William, 173
 Bowman, *Rev.* Thomas, 191-4
 Boyle, *family*, 1-26; Ann (*d.* 1889), 11, 17, 19, 20, 21; Ann (*d.* 1936), 19*n.*; Catherine, 19*n.*; Charles Humphrey, 21, 26; Emma, 19*n.*; Humphrey Bellamy, 1-20; H. J., 25-6; James (*d.* 1815), 1-2; James (*d.* 1909), 1, 15, 18-21; James (*d.* 1953), 21, 23-6; Mary, 19*n.*; Mary (*née* Laverack), 19, 21, 23; Philip, 21, 26

- Boyle & Son Ltd., 11-26
 Boyle Carr & Co., 11-13
 Boyle Gill & Co., 13-17
 Boyle, Gill, Mennell & Pitts, 13
 Bradford, 139, 140, 184
 Bradford Music Festival (1859), 151*n*.
 Braithwaite, *Dr. E. R.*, 34, 52, 54
 Bretton Mill, *nr. Dewsbury*, 188
 Bristol, workhouse, 77
 British Museum, 196
 British Gas Company Bill, 130
 "British Workmen" houses, 54
 Brook, James, 116
 Brown, *Miss, singer*, 147, 148; George, 113; William, *of Dundee*, 2
 Bryce, James, 31
 Buckmaster, *Mr.*, 58, 61*, 67
 Buckton, *family*, 43; Catherine Mary, 34, 43, 53, 54, 55*, 56*, 57, 58, 59*n.*, 67, 68; Joseph, 34
 Burdett-Coutts, Angela, *baroness*, 62
 Burley, 184, 185
 Burley Hall, 180
 Burley-in-Wharfedale, 159
 Burnell, John, 173; Samuel, 173; William, 173, 176
 Burnley, 86
 Burton, *Capt., of Wakefield*, 188; Eli, 173
 Butler, *Dr. George*, 30; Josephine, 30, 31
- Calder, *Miss*, 68
 Cambridge University, 47; Examinations Syndicate, 46; Extension Committee, 46; local examinations, 27, 29-30, 31, 34, 36*, 45, "Higher Locals", 31*, 44
 Candler, Harry, 181
 Carbutt, *Miss*, 48*n.*, 50
 Carlile, Mary Ann, 4; Richard, 3-9; *Mrs. Richard*, 4, 8-9
 Carpenter, Edward, 35*n.*; Mary, 37-8
 Carr, Peter, 12-13
 Carr Gill & Baines, 13
 Carr-Ibbetson, *Sir Henry*, 162
 Carson, Samuel, 75
 Carter, John, 179; *R. M., alderman*, 145*n.*; William Elmsall, 159, 186
 Cavendish, Lady Frederick, 46; Lord Frederick, *M.P.*, 28, 37, 46*n.*
 Cawood, John, 115, 116, 121, 124, 128
- Cawood, 184
 Chapel Allerton, 47, 55
 Charity Commissioners, 49
 Chartism, 141, 145*n.*, 150
 Charlesworth, John, 116, 120, 133
 Charnock, Charles, 14, 17
 Chatsworth House (Derbyshire), 168
 Chatterton, *D.A.*, 115, 119
 Chester Cathedral, 180
 Clapham, John, 116, 131
 Clapham and Dickson, 135
 Clark, G. Kitson, 43
 Clarke, *Mr., grocer*, 113
 Clarkson, *Mr., vicar of Silkstone*, 191
 Clegg, Samuel, 114, 133, 134*
 Clifton, *Mr., J.P.*, 165, 184, 186
 Clough, Anne Jemima, 30, 31, 41
 Coal Gas Company, 125-7, 130-2; *see also* Leeds Gas Light Company
 Cobbett's Register, 2
 Cole, *Sir Henry*, 61
 Colne valley, 144
 Commissioners for Lamps, 115, 118, 120, 121, 135
 Cookson, William, *mayor of Leeds*, 78
 Conder, *Rev. G. M.*, 143, 149
 Cooke, John, 163-4, 167; Sarah, *see* Vavasour
 Corn Law (1815), 161
 Country Parson's Advice to his Parishioners, *The* (1680), 191*n*.
 Crane, *Miss*, 46
 Criggleston, 188*
 Croft, Ralph, 75
 Crosley, *Mr., gas meter supplier*, 125, 129, 130, 134
 Crossland, Thomas, 113
 Crossley, *Mrs. Edward, of Halifax*, 33*n*.
 Crump, *W. B.*, 196
 Crystal Palace Exhibition (1851), 154
 Curwen, John, 138*n*.
- D'Anteny, *Madame*, 147
 Dacre Banks, 22
 Darwin and Company, *of Sheffield*, 117, 128
 Davies, Emily, 29*, 30, 37
 Dawson, Nathaniel, 81
 Delavanti, *Signor*, 147, 148, 153
 Denman, *Mr. Common Sergeant*, 5, 6

- Dent, *Mrs.*, 54-5
 Denton Park, 162, 171, 177, 178
 De Stopham, *Sir Robert*, 159
 Dewsbury, bread riots, 187-95; mill, 187
 Dickinson, Joshua, 116, 131
 Dob Park, 166, 168, 174, 176-7
 Dobson, Israel, 113
 Dodgshun, James, 59
 Domestic Economy Congress (1881), 60
 Doncaster, 167, 184, 185, 186
 Dorchester, gaol, 4, 8
 Dray, Edwin, 154
 Driver, Christopher, 181
 Dundas, *Mrs.*, 47
 Durham University, 27

 Earls Heaton, 187
 Earnshaw, Matthew, 83
 Eddison, *Dr.*, 57; Annie (*née* Anna Paulina Tatham), 36, 41, 46*, 48*, 61; R. W., 41*n.*
 Eden, F. M., 110; *Sir John*, 180
 Edinburgh Gas Company, 125
 Edinburgh Oil Gas Company, 130, 132
 Edinburgh University, 166
 Education Code (1875), 65
 Edwards, Selina, 103
 Enclosure Act (1779), 176; (1780), 168
 Enclosure Award (1780), 177
 Endowed Schools Commissioners, 37, 38
 England, William, 165, 169*
 "Enthusiasts", 189, 194

 Fagg, Robert, 96
 Fairbairn, *Sir Andrew*, 37, 57
 Fairbairn, Peter, & Co., 17*n.*
 Faith, William, 113
 Falkus, M. E., 114, 115, 127, 135*
 Farnley, estate, 162
 Farnley Hall, 162
 Farrar, *Mr.*, 113
 Fawkes, *family*, 162; Francis, 162; Mary, *see* Vavasour; Thomas, 162; Walter, 162, 174, 186; Walter Ramsden (Hawksworth), 162; William, 181
 Fearon, *Mr.*, 38
 Fell Beck Mill, *nr.* Pateley Bridge, 22-3; House, 23
 Fenton, Murray and Wood, 117, 118, 120, 121

 Fenwick, Thomas, 41*n.*; *Mrs. Thomas*, 41-2, 48*n.*, 50, 55, 60, 61, 66, 68*
 Fewston, parish, 176, 177
 Fields and Co., 87
 Fitch, Joshua, 31
 Flax industry, 1-26 *passim*
 Fodin, *Mr.*, 113
 Ford, *Mrs.*, 30*n.*; *Miss E. J.*, 48*n.*
 Forster, W. E., 45
 Fowkes, *Miss*, 67
 Fox, *Mr.*, *clergyman*, 180; Charles James, 182; Fanny, 170
 Free Press Movement, 2-9
 Friendly Societies, 90
 Froebel teaching methods, 46
 Fulneck (Falneck) estate, Pudsey, 195

 Gale, Christopher, 170
 Galloway, *Miss, of Glasgow*, 45
 Game Laws, 185
 Garlick, *Miss*, 33*n.*, 44, 61, 66; Joseph Prince, 145
 Garnett, *Mrs.*, *of Leeds*, 67
 Garrett, Elizabeth, 29
 Garsed, Joshua, 116
 Gas Light Company, *see* Leeds Gas Light Company
 Gaskell, *Miss*, 41
 Georgia (U.S.A.), colony, 189, 194
 Gentlemen's Employment Committee, 42
 Giles, Netlam and Francis, map (of Leeds) (1815), 79
 Gill, John, 177; Joseph, 10, 12
 Gilpin, Samuel, 113
 Gipton, John, 113
 Girls' Public Day School Company, 48
 Glasgow, 45
 Glasgow Total Abstinence Society, 139
 Gloyn, Elizabeth, 31
 Godley, *Revd. John*, 191*
 Goold, *Mr.*, 180-1
 Gossage, Thomas, 113
 Gott, John, *blacksmith*, 113; *Revd. Dr. John, vicar of Leeds*, 48, 49; *Mrs. John*, 48*n.*
 Governesses, 29, 30, 36, 43, 45, 50-1
 Green, *Mr.*, *Workhouse committee member*, 102; William, 113
 Greenhow, *Dr. T. M., of Newcastle*, 43*, 52

- Grey, *Mrs. Maria*, 37, 38, 39, 48, 49-50
 Grisi, *Madame*, 139
 Guardians of the Poor, 79-80
- Haigh, John, 113
 Hale, *Sir Matthew*, 76
 Halifax, 97, 109, 139, 156
Halifax Guardian, 156
 Hall, Henry, 86
 Harby, *Mr.*, *surgeon*, 113
 Hardman, Thomas, 96
 Harrison, *Mr.*, *preacher*, 179-80; Anne, 170; *Professor B.*, 153; James, 174; J. F. C., 140-1
 Harrogate, 163, 167
 Hastings, *Lady Margaret*, 194-5; Selina (*countess of Huntingdon*), 194-5
 Hatton, *Mr.*, *singer*, 147, 148; John Liptrot, 147, 148
 Hawick Gas Light Company, 135
 Hawksworth, Walter Ramsden, 162
 Headingley, Oil Mill Lane, 20
 Headingley Hall, 41*n.*
 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act (1802), 185
 Heaton, Ellen, 30*n.*, 33*n.*, 42, 53; Fanny 29, 30, 31*, 42, 47, 48*, 61; John, *butcher*, 113; John, *stationer*, 10, *Dr. John Deakin*, 28, 29*, 37, 46, 53, 55
 Helen, *princess, duchess of Albany*, 70
 Henderson, *Revd. Dr. William George*, 48, 49
 Hewitt, *Mr.*, *grocer*, 113
 Hill, John, 115, 116
 Hirst, R. 120, 134, 136
 Hives, John, 116
 Hobson, *Mr.*, *Commissioner for Lamps*, 118; Joseph, 142-3
 Hogarth, William, 144
 Hoggett, *Mr.*, *curate*, 191
 Holbeck, 55; Commercial St., 12; gas supply, 125; Mann's Field, 55; Mechanics' Institute, 54; *see also* Little Holbeck
 Holdforth, James, 116
 Holdsworth & Co., Victoria Mills, 16
 Hole, James, 141, 151*
 Holme valley, 144
 Holmes, John, 165, 175, 178; *Revd.*, 176
 "Holmes, William" (Joseph Rhodes), 5
 "Holy Club, The", 189
 Hook, *Revd. W. F.* 145
 Hooker, *Revd. Richard*, 187*n.*, 189-91
 Hope, Charles, *earl of Hopetoun*, 191
 Houldsworth, *Mr.*, 120, 133
 Howard, George William Frederick, *Viscount Morpeth*, 11
 Hudson, *Revd.*, 166
 Huddersfield, 139
 Hull, 107, 127
 Hullah, John, 138*n.*
 Hume, Joseph, 7
 Hunslet Mechanics' Institute, 24
 Hunter, *Dr. H. J.*, 52-3
 Huntingdon, *Countess of*, *see* Hastings
 Huth, *Mrs.*, *of Huddersfield*, 30*n.*
 Hutton, Elizabeth (*née Ayscough*), 189*n.*; James, 189, 191*n.*; *Revd. John*, 189*n.*
- Ibbetson, family, 167; *Sir Henry*, 162, 166, 171, 177-9, 182, 186; *Sir James*, 96, 177
 Illingworth, William, 174
 Industrial Arts and Sloyd Committee, 42, 51
 Ingham, Benjamin, 188-95; William, 188
 Innys, William, *bookseller*, 189
 Inquiry into Pious Uses (1663), 76
 International Exhibition, Third, (South Kensington), 61
- Jackson, Francis, 75; W. L., 48
 Jefferson, S., 61, 63, 67
 Jenkinson, Josiah, 75
 Jennings, *Mr.*, *plasterer*, 113
 Johnson, Matthew, 92, 93
 Johnstone, *Mrs.*, 60
 Jones and Barker, 120
 Jowitt, *Mrs.*, 48*n.*
 Jullien, Louis, 139
- Kaye, *Sir John*, 187-8
 Keighley, girls' school, 39
 Kemplay, Richard, 116, 130
 Kennedy, *Miss C. L.*, 48
 Kent, *Mr.*, 80
 Kirkby, John, 175

- Kitson, *family*, 43; Edward, 56;
 Elizabeth, 42, 47, 48*n.*, 61; Emily
 Christiana, 30*n.*, 33*n.*, 34*, 39, 42, 54*,
 55*, 56*, 57, 61, 63*; James (*junior*)
 (*later 1st baron Airedale*), 34, 48
 Knaresborough Forest, 177
 Knaresborough Volunteers, 184
 Koenig, *Herr*, 139
- Lamb, Henry, 185*n.*
 Lancashire, ropemakers, 18-19
 Lancashire Militia, 184
 Lancaster, Martha, 170; Thomas, 170
 Land, *families*, 21
 Lascelles, *Hon. W. H.*, of *Harewood*, 183
 Laverack, Mary, *see* Boyle
 Leas, Thomas, 103
 Ledgard, *Mr.*, *school inspector*, 48
 Leeds, 163, 167, 183, 191;
 Albion Street Music Hall, 146, 156
 Amphitheatre, 153*n.*, *see also* Leeds
 Casino and Music Hall
 Barran's Clothing Factory, 59
 Basinghall St., 19, 125
 Blayds Court, 13
 Board Schools, 34, 52, 56, 63
 Bond St., 125
 Briggate, 118
 Call Lane, 118
 Canning St., 12
 Carlton Court, Albion St., 41
 Carlton Hill Board School, 57
 Central High School (City of Leeds
 School), 196
 Charity School, 38, 76
 Chartism, 141, 145*n.*, 150
 Church Institute, 27, 142
 City Varieties, 151
 "Claremont", Clarendon Rd., 29, 30*,
 47
 Clayton Wood Industrial Estate, 25
 Commercial Buildings, 10
 Concordia Mills, 23
 Cookridge St. Baths, 19
 Corporation, 136; minutes, 76
 Dark Arches, 24
 Dewsbury Rd., 12
 Duke St., 13
 Fleece Lane, *off* Meadow Lane, 23
 Free School, 75
- Gas supply, 114-36
 Goodman St., 13
 "Harrison's Charity School", 38
 Hillary Place, 35*n.*, 37
 House of Correction, 75, 82, 109
 House of Recovery, 87
 Hunslet Lane, 12, 13, 119
 Industrial Dwelling Society, 56
 Industrial School, 104
 Infirmary, 60, 97*
 Isle of Cynder, 23, 24
 Jack Lane, 23
 Jack Lane Mill, 11-13, 16
 King's Mill, 24
 Kirkgate, 118
 Ladies' Educational Institute, 41
 Ladies' Seminary, St. Mary's Mount,
 30
 Lady Lane, 76
 Leylands, The, 59
 Low Bridge, 116
 Lunatic Asylum, 87
 Marsh Lane, 117
 Marshall School of Cookery, 64
 Meadow Lane, 12, 14, 116, 117, 119
 Mechanics' Institute, 27, 33, 34, 42*,
 52, 141, 145
 Mill Hill, No. 40, 18, 23
 Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel, 19, 43,
 54*n.*; school, 19
 Moorland Terrace, 34
 Music, 137-58 *passim*
 New Station, 23
 New Station Street, 24
 North bar, 76
 North Hall Street Mission Room, 59
 North St., 76
 Old Bankruptcy Court, 61, 62
 Parish church, churchwardens, 80, 98,
 101; vestry, 77, 78*, 79, 84, 86
 Perseverance Mill, 14, 17
 Philosophical Hall, 31, 67
 Poor Estate funds, 49*
 Poorhouse, 76
 Poor relief, 75-113 *passim*
 Population, 95
Princess Palace, 153*n.*
 St. Andrew' Chamber, Park Row, 37,
 41, 44
 St. George's Fields, *see* Woodhouse
 Cemetery

- St. James's Lodge, Woodhouse Lane, 48
 Sanitary conditions, 52-3
 Social Science Congress (1871), 37
 South Market, 115
 Sovereign St., 24
 Swinegate, 20; No. 7, 24; No. 39 (40 Mill Hill), 23, 24
 Tower Buildings, Albion St., 41, 62
 Town Hall, 157
 Trafalgar Mill, 13-17
 Trafalgar Row, 14, 18
 Union Court, *off* Briggate, 2
 University, 196, 197
 Upper Albion St., 51, 62
 Water Lane, 119, 125
 Wellington St., 12
 West Park Ring Rd., 25
White Swan Varieties, 153*n.*
 Woodhouse Cemetery, 19
 Woodhouse Mechanics' Institute, 54
 Woodhouse Moor, 144
 Workhouse, 75-113: administration, 79-94; admission to, 88, 89, 95; apothecaries, 83-4; apprenticeship, 99-100, 102-4, 112; auditors, 85; bastardy, 85, 97; Board, 79*, 86, 93; building, 78-9; Committee, 79-112 *passim*; diet, 97, 105; finances, 87-8; lunatics, 84, 105; lying-in wards, 90; Master, 80-3, 86*, 93, 102; nurses, 85; officials, 79-86; Orphan House, 79; outdoor relief, 89-91, 92-3, 96, 105, 108-9, 110; overseers, 90, 91, 93, 98, 101; regulations, 97-9; standard of living, 95-7; vagrants, 105; "work-house test", 93, 96
 York St., 117, 118, 128
 Leeds Athletics Club, 62
 Leeds Bible Society, 145
 Leeds Casino and Concert Hall, 142-4, 151, 152, 153*n.*, 154
 Leeds Conversation Club, 28, 31, 41*n.*, 42, 45*n.*
 Leeds Council of Education, 45
 Leeds Educational Board, 27
 Leeds Gas Light Bill, 118
 Leeds Gas Light Company, 114-36 *passim*
 Leeds Girls' High School, 48-50; Committee, 42; Company, 48, 49
 Leeds Grammar School, 49
 Leeds Improvement Society, 28
Leeds Intelligencer, 102, 111, 115, 123, 130, 142, 149, 150-1
 Leeds Ladies' Educational Association, 31*, 32, 35, 36*, 41, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50*, 51; Governesses' Registry, 50
 Leeds Library, 196
 Leeds Madrigal and Motet Society, 147, 148
Leeds Mercury, 10, 17, 62, 111, 142, 154
 Leeds Music Hall, 139
 Leeds New Gas Company, 127, 131*, 132*, 136; Act, 127, 132
 Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 27, 28, 42
 Leeds (Holbeck) Political Union, 9
 Leeds Public Dispensary, 145
 Leeds Rational Recreation Society, 137-58; emergence of, 140-5; influence of, 152-8
 Leeds School Board, 37, 57, 59, 65-6
 Leeds Society for Promoting the Observance of the Sabbath, 145
Leeds Times, 126
 Lees, Florence, 60
 Leopold, *prince, duke of Albany*, 70
 Leuty, William, 165
 Leybourne, George, 153
 Lincoln Cathedral, 180
 Lincoln College, Oxford, 189
 Linsley, Robert, 82
 Linwood, *Miss, of London*, 167
 Little Holbeck, Cross Keys Inn, 9
 Littlewood, *Mr., Workhouse Master*, 102; Joseph, 86
 Liverpool, 30, 31, 139, 140, 144; School (of Cookery), 68
 Liverpool Oil Gas Company, 130
 Local Government Board, 52
 London, Thomas, 56, 59*, 60, 68; *Mrs.*, 55
 London, 167-8; Cold Bath Fields prison, 7-8; Fleet St., 4; Giltspur St. Compter, 5, 6, 7, 8; National Training School, 67; Newgate, 5, 6; Old Bailey, 5; St. Sepulchre's church, 189; Somerset House, 167
 London & N.W. Railway Company, 23
 London Gas Light and Coke Company, 114

- Lover, Samuel, 147
 Lowett, Robert, 116
 Luccock, *family*, 43; *Mrs.*, 35
 Lupton, *family*, 43; Charles Athelstane (obituary), 72; Frances Elizabeth, 28-9, 30, 31, 32, 33*n.*, 35, 36-7, 40, 41*, 42*, 43, 47, 48*, 54, 57, 61*, 66, 67, 68; Francis, 31, 42, 46

 McCombe, *Miss*, 41, 58
 McGill, *Mr.*, 57
 Mainzer, Joseph, 138, 141
 Manchester, 30, 139, 144
 Manchester Oil Gas Company, 130
 Mann, James, 3, 4
 Mario, *Signor*, 139
 Marshall, H. C., 16; John, 2, 9*n.*, 12, 116; Theodosia, 30*n.*, 48*n.*
 Marshall & Co., 11-12
 Marsland, G., 129
 Marston Colliery, 120
 Martin, *Miss*, 56
 Martineau, Harriet, 42, 111
 Mason, *Mr.*, 34, 54
 Maude, *Miss*, of Knowsthorpe Hall, 41, 48*n.*, 61, 62, 66
 Mechanics' Institutes, 151, *see also* Leeds
 Meiklejohn, *Professor*, 46
 Mennell, Thomas, 15; William, 10, 12, 15
 Merryweather, *Mr.*, of Otley, 100, 101
 Methodists, 179-80, 189-95 *passim*
 Meyer, Xavier, 62, 64, 67
 Milnor, Robert, 80
 Milton, Lord, 183
 Mingay, G. E., 172
 Molesworth, *Sir* William, 11
 Moody, Fanny, 170
 Moore, *Mr.*, 170; George, 113
 Moravian Church, 189*n.*, 195
 Morgan, Lewis, 113; William, 189
 Murdoch, William, 114
 Murray, M., 115, 116, 117, 128
 "Music for the People" movement, 137-58 *passim*
 Myers, Frederick, 31

 National and Metropolitan District Nursing Association, 60
 National Health Society, 60

 National schools, 43
 National Union for the Improvement of the Education of Women and Girls, 38, 39
 Nell, David, 116
 New Lanark, 104
 New Miller's Dam Mill, *nr.* Dewsbury, 188
 Newcastle upon Tyne, 1
 Newhall-with-Clifton, 159
 Newton, Isaac, 189*n.*
 Newton, 159, 168
 Nichols, William, 10
 Nidderdale, 21, 22
 North Eastern Railway Company, 23
 North of England Council for the Promotion of the Higher Education of Women, 31, 32, 38, 41
 Northern Union of Schools of Cookery, 67, 68, 69, 70*, 71
 Northern United Registry for Governesses, 51
 Nunnelly, Thomas, 57

 Oakes, George, 116
 Oddy, *families*, 21
 Oil Gas Company, 123, 125, 130-2; Act, 123
 Oldham, William, 116
 Oldham, 102, 103, 139
 Orange, George, 104, 113
 Oriental and General Bath Company of Leeds Ltd., 19
 Ossett, 188, 189, 191
 Otley, 100, 163, 170, 172, 182, 183, 184, 185; mill, 173
 Otley Agricultural Society, 172, 178
 Otley Armed Association, 173, 184
 Otley Chevin, 165-6
 Overend, Hannah, 169
 Owen, Robert, 104
 Oxford, 189, 191*n.*, 194
 Oxford (Gas) Company, 127
 Oxford Local Examinations, 27*, 35, 36, 45; Higher Local Examinations for Women, 45
 Overseers of the Poor, 80

 Paley, Jane, 48*n.*, Richard, 117
 Paine, Thomas, 3, 5
 Palmer, Elihu, 3

- Pape, Joseph, 169-70, 171
 Parker, Mrs., 61
 Parliamentary elections (1806, 1807), 182-3; (1835), 10-11; (1837), 11
 Parson, William, 10
 Parsons, Walter, 196
 Passavant, family, 43; Fanny J., 58
 Pastoral Aid Society, 145
 Peacock, Miss, 64
 Pearson, Samuel, 113
 Pechy, Dr. Edith, 46, 58, 68
 "People's Concerts", 137-58 *passim*
 Phillips, Reuben, 119-20, 122, 133*
 Pickles, Mr., *curate of Weston*, 179
 Pitt, William, *the Younger*, 164, 182
 Pitts, Henry, 15; James, 12, 15
 Plas Newydd (Anglesey), 168
 Pollard, Joseph, 188
 Pomfret, Mr., *china manufacturer*, 113
 Pontefract, 167, 184
 Poor Law (Old), 75-113
 Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), 92, 93*, 110
 Poor Law Report (1834), 105
Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated (Martineau), 111
 Power, Alfred, 92
 Procter, Joseph, 179
 Prospère, Monsieur, 139
Purefoy Letters, The, 160, 173

 Queen's College, The, Oxford, 189
 Quick, Mr., M.A., 68

 Radical Reformers, 2-3, 7, 9
 Radcliffe, Dr. J. N., 52
 Ramsden, Mr. *of Old Malt Mill*, 113
 Rational Recreation movement, 137-58 *passim*
 Rawson, George, 116
 Redruth, 114
 Reform Act (1832), 10, 162
 Renton, Thomas, 113
Republican, The, 2, 7, 8
 Reynolds, Mr., *Commissioner for Lamps*, 118
 Richardson, John, 113; Joseph, 104, 113
 Richmond, Mr., 38
 Ridsdale, Mr., *of Esholt*, 181
 Risdale, Messrs. J. H. and G., 127

 Rhodes, Joseph ("William Holmes"), 5, 7; Mrs. (Rhodes), 8*n.*; Mary Ann, 8*n.*
 Robinson, Canon, 38-9; Miss, 40, 41; Miss, *of Keighley*, 49
 Roundell, C. S., 37
 Routh, John, 20*n.*
 Rücker, Professor Arthur, 48
 Rutter, Miss, *of Hull*, 67
 Rye, Mr., *clergyman*, 180

 "Sacramentarians", 189
 Sadler, Benjamin, *mayor of Leeds*, 86
 St. John's Ambulance Association, 60
 Sales, Henry, 28, 29, 30, 31, 35, 37, 57
 Sandal, parish, 188
 Salt, Mrs. Titus, 33*n.*, 61, 63*
 Sanitary Aid Society, 60
 Schoolmistresses' Association, 30
 Schools Inquiry Commission, 29*
 Schunk, Mrs., 43
 Schwanfelder, Mr., *portrait painter*, 167
 Seeley, Professor, 41
 Seyton, Miss Clara, 154
 Science and Art Department, South Kensington, 27, 58, 61, 63, 64, 68, 69
 Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 92
 Select Committee on Technical Instruction, 42
 Senior, Mrs. *of Wakefield*, 61, 62, 67
 Settlement, Laws of, 77, 97
 Sharples, William, 142*n.*
 Shaw, John Hope, 145, 149, 150; William, 184
 Sheffield, 167; Social Science Congress (1865), 29
 Sheffield Gentlewomen's Employment Committee, 51
 Sherwin's Register, 3
 Siddons, Mrs. Sarah, 167
 Simpson, Thomas, 171, 174; William, 174-5
 Simpson & Beevers, *accountants*, 20*n.*
 Sinclair, Revd. William, 143
 Skeat, W. W., 159
 Skipton, 184
 Skirrow, James, 163; John, 171, 174; Mrs., 176
 Sleddin, Maria, 86
 Sloyd, 51
 Smelthouses, 22

- Smiles, Dr. Samuel, 145
 Smith, David, of *Lindley*, 173; Samuel, mayor of *Bradford*, 140n.; William, 116
 Smith and Moore, 124
 Smithells, Professor Arthur, 69
 Snowden (Yorks), 168
 Society for the Registration of Teachers, 50
 Society for the Suppression of Vice, 5, 6
 Society of Arts, 27*, 69
 Spark, William, 144, 147
 Speight, family, 80-1; Mr., 80
 Spence, John, maltster, 113
 Spencer, Mrs., 59*, 60
 Squires, John, 101, 108
 Stables, Lucy, 45
 Stalker, Revd. A. M., 142, 156
 Stalybridge Old Brass Band, 151
 Stephenson, Florance, 58, 70
 Stone, Mr., 182
 Stuart, James, 30, 38
 Sunday Band Concerts, 146
 Sunderland, Mrs., "Yorkshire Queen of Song", 147, 148, 151
 Swinton (Yorks), 167
 Sykes, Richard, 75, 76
- Tadcaster, 97
 Tatham, Anna Paulina, *see* Eddison
 Taylor, Mr., architect, 162; Mr., grocer, 113
 Teachers' Guild, 50
 Technical Instruction Acts, 52, 69
 Technical Instruction Committee, 71
 Tenant, T., 131
 Tennant, Thomas, 86
 Theed, Mrs., 56, 68
 Tholfsen, Professor T., 153, 156
 Thoresby, Ralph, 76
 Thompson, Mr., 58; Eleanor, 41, 48n., 61; Thomas, 173; V., 41n.; William, 178
 Thornhill, parish, 187
 Thornton, William, 176-7
 Thornton, 109
Times, The, 138
 Todd, John, 176; Thomas, 175, 176
 Tootal, family, 43; Clara, 30, 31, 48n.
 Trade Union movement, 7
 Trevelyan, G. M., 185
- Trehwella, Mrs., 33n.
 Tuke, John, map (of Leeds) (1781), 79
 Tunbridge, William, 7-8
 Turner, J. M. W., 162
 Tweedy, John Drumelzier, 103, 104, 105
- University Extension Movement, 46
 University Extension Scheme, 32
- Vavasour, family, 159, 162, 168; Charles, 181; Edward (Ned), 163, 166; Ellen, 167; John le, 159; Sir Malger le, 159, 162; Mary (née Fawkes), 162; Sarah (née Cooke), 163-4, 167, 170, 179, 181, 185, 186; Walter, 163; Walter Ayscough Fawkes 162; William, 159-86, Deputy Lieut. of West Riding, 184, 160, early years, 163, 166, final years, 186, home and leisure, 162-8, magistrate, 160, 184-5, marriage, 163-4, management of estate, 168-79, military service, 184, politics, 182-3, religious views, 179-80
 Victoria University, 47
Views of the Seats of Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland (Neale), 162
- Wainwright, John, joiner, 113
 Wakefield, 33, 61, 188, 191; Asylum, 84; House of Correction, 129
 Walker, Mr., of *Leeds Infirmary*, 57; Mrs. E., 48n.
 Ward, Mr., 82; Joseph, 175
 Wardle, Robert, 174
 Wath-upon-Deane, 164
 Watson, James, of *Malton*, 7, 8; William, boat builder, 113
Weekly Miscellany, 187-91
 Wesley, Charles, 189*, 191n.; John, 189*
 West Riding Educational Board, 27*, 28, 29*, 31
 West Riding Militia, 96
 Westminster School, 189n.
 Weston, nr. *Otley*, 159-85 *passim*; church 159, 171n. 179; estate, 164, 168-79, 185; liberty, 184; manor, 159; mill, 173; parish, 168-79 *passim*; township, 176-7

- Weston Hall, 162, 164-5, 180, 181, 182;
see also Weston, estate
 Weston Manor, 159*n*.
 Wetherby, 184
 Whitaker, Dr. T. D., 162
 Whitfield, George, 194; William, *grocer*,
 113
 Wigton, 130
 Wilberforce, William, 183
 Wilkinson, John 13, 14, 17
 Wilkinson & Co., Goodman St., 16
 Wilks, Jonathan, 116
 Williams, Mrs. Rowland, 68
 Wilson, Mr., *merchant*, 113, Mr., *of the*
Manor House, Otley, 183, 186;
 Joseph, *joiner*, 113; Lucy, 31, 32,
 35*, 36*, 37, 42; Thomas, *of Hillary*
Place, 31, 35*n*., 42; Tom, *clergyman*,
 180
 Winsor, Frederick Albert, 114
 Wolfenden, John 103
 Wolstenholme, Elizabeth, 31
 Women's Educational Union, 50
 Women's Emigration Society, 51
 Wood, William Page, *Baron Hatherley*,
 48
 Woodhouse, Harriet, 102
 Woolly Mill, *nr. Dewsbury*, 188
 Worksop, 97
 Wormald, Mr., *factory-owner*, 103
 Worth, *families*, 21
 Wortley, Hon. John Stuart, 11
 Wright, Charles J., 57

 York, 188
 York Association for the Improvement
 of Female Education, 38

 York Courant, 194
 York Minster, 180
 Yorkshire, 144, 151
 Yorkshire Board of Education, 27-8, 31,
 32-9, 42, 44, 54, 57; Ladies'
 Committee, 27, 28, 30, 31, 35*n*., 42;
 Ladies' (Honorary) Council, 27, 28,
 32-9; Library, 36-7, Committee, 36,
 37, 44; Ladies' Standing Committee,
 31, 32
 Yorkshire College of Science, 31, 32,
 46*, 47*, 48, 58
 Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education,
 27-71: administration and member-
 ship, 39-43; Committee for Education
 in Leeds, 46; Department for Promot-
 ing the Employment of Gentlewomen,
 50; education of middle-class women
 and girls, 43-52; Health Committee,
 42, 46, 53, 57-60; health education,
 52-66; Library (Students'), 37, 41,
 44-5; local committees, 40; origins,
 27-32; Science School, 58; Sheffield
 branch, 40; *see also* Leeds Girls' High
 School; Yorkshire Training School of
 Cookery
 Yorkshire Training School of Cookery,
 40, 41*, 51, 58, 60-71; Wakefield
 school, 62-3; York school, 62
 Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institu-
 tes, 27*, 28, 31, 35*n*., 42*
 Yorkshire Working Men's Singing
 Association, 141
 Young, Mr., *porter dealer*, 113; Thomas,
 175, 178

 Zion School, New Wortley, 54, 55

